

**Use of Social Media for Sustainable Peace by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist
Convention, 2010-2020**

**Adebayo Ola AFOLARANMI
LCU/PG/001147**

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Certification

This thesis entitled “**Use of Social Media for Sustainable Peace by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 2010-2020**” was carried out by **Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola** with Matric Number **LCU/PG/001147** in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University Ibadan, Nigeria under my supervision.

.....

Assoc. Prof. Akeem Amodu

Supervisor

.....

Date

.....

Assoc. Prof. Akeem Amodu

Head of Department

.....

Date

Dedication

This research work is dedicated to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and the supreme Mediator who has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

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Abstract

Conflicts in the world impair sustainable peace. Conflicts have to be resolved and transformed for peaceful coexistence to achieve one of the seventeen blueprints of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals – peaceful and non-violent societies. A process of attaining peace is peacebuilding. One of peacebuilding means is mediative dialogue. Many faith-based organisations, especially the Nigerian Baptist Convention, resolve conflicts among its churches through various means. As the world has metamorphosed digitally and social media changes communication means globally, using social media in mediative dialogue will likely improve conflict resolution by faith-based organisations. This research's objective is to critically engage in the study of responses of the Convention's pastors to the actualisation of Goal Sixteen, which aims at peaceful and non-violent societies. The study examined how the Convention's pastors use social media in mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts in building peace in churches. The study focused on using social media in mediative dialogue among pastors in Baptist churches within Ibadan city. It focused on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Its time frame is 2010 to 2020. It was done through three qualitative research methods: sample surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The study discovers that many Baptist pastors in Ibadan have been using at least a social media platform. It reveals that while few pastors consciously use social media to promote sustainable peace and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue, most pastors are sceptical about using social media to resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue. While most pastors that use social media use WhatsApp and Facebook, many are just migrating to Telegram, and few pastors use Twitter. The research recommended that governments, faith-based organisations, and pastors of the Convention should deploy social media in the process of mediative dialogue as an instrument for deepening sustainable peace.

Keywords: *Sustainable Peace, Conflict Transformation, Mediative Dialogue, Social Media, Nigerian Baptist Pastors*

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

There is no way to discuss a peaceful and non-violent society without discussing conflicts and how to resolve them. There are many conflicts in the world: conflicts within oneself, interpersonal conflicts, marital conflicts, conflicts in churches, and between churches, conflicts within a nation, and above all, international conflicts. Conflicts are indeed part of everyday life. People have to resolve these conflicts, and one has to build peace in the person that has the conflicts within or people involved in interpersonal conflicts so that there will be a peaceful and non-violent society.

On the other hand, peacebuilding is fundamentally about the procedure of achieving peace¹. Nevertheless, peace building varies considerably in relation to methods, scope of undertakings, and time frame depending on how one understands the concept of peace². So, to resolve or transform conflict, it is essential to comprehend and address the emotional states, matters, and relationships as well as the conduct of people involved in the conflict³. Since ancient times, there have been many mediators and conciliators that have strived to win over and soothe the hostility and anger of disputing parties⁴.

There may be no shortcut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of people in the aftermath of sustained violence or conflict⁵. Nonetheless, conflicts must be resolved, and people must take deliberate active roles in resolving these conflicts and promoting peacebuilding and sustainability.

Based on Pauline injunction that “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has *committed to us the*

message of reconciliation,” every Christian is mandated to make the process of reconciliation work in or after any conflict⁶. It was also emphasized that “it is ... an active call for all Christians to seek reconciliation within the storm of conflict”⁷. Against the background of the fact that reconciliation and peacemaking are central to Christian life and worship, many religious organizations have had to be actively involved in reconciliation programmes^{8, 9}. A significant aspect of the ministry of a church pastor is to resolve ensued conflicts not only among his or her church members, but also non-church members¹⁰. Besides, pastors’ involvement is usually sought when it comes to conflict resolution and reconciliation¹⁰.

Furthermore, the modern world has metamorphosed from an analogue world to a digital world where digitalization has influenced and continues to influence many old-style establishments¹¹. In this digital world, technological tools play significant roles, and the emergence of social media has tremendously changed the ways people communicate throughout the world¹². In the words of a scholar, “The cyber age we are witnessing has prompted the digitalization process at an exponential pace and has largely contributed to the astonishing popularization of social media”¹³. Major roots of conflicts are closely connected to the “question of unsustainable development”¹⁰. So, in order to achieve Goal Number Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations that has to do with “peaceful and non-violent societies,” the Nigerian Baptist Convention as a faith-based organization (through its arms, boards, committees, bodies, and most especially churches) has been involved in resolving conflicts within/among its churches and organisations through various means^{14, 15}. One of these means is mediative dialogue. For the reason that social media has changed the way faith-based organizations operate in this world that is surrounded with information and technologies, stakeholders (especially church pastors) in the Convention have been using the Internet generally and social media specifically to resolve conflicts^{11, 15, 16}.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

One of the blueprints of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations is peaceful and non-violent societies. Nonetheless, conflict is inevitable in any society, churches inclusive. As a faith-based organisation, the Nigerian Baptist Convention has been resolving conflicts within/among its churches and organisations through various means, thereby promoting peaceful and non-violent societies. Pastors, in particular, have been resolving conflicts among their church members and non-church members alike. Furthermore, social media has been significantly influencing the ways people communicate with each other as people who are using the Internet generally and social media specifically keep increasing daily. Therefore, using social media as one of the modern ways of communication in mediative dialogue will likely improve conflict resolution by faith-based organizations, especially church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and thereby make Goal Number Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations more achievable before the year 2030.

1.3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to critically engage in the study of responses of church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in actualizing the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations with reference to mediative dialogue as a means of conflict resolution. The study particularly examines how church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention use social media in mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts in building peace in the churches. The objectives are to:

- (i) critically explain the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations with reference to the philosophy of peace through mediative dialogue;
- (ii) explore the theological foundations of peace through mediative dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts by church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention;
- (iii) find out the nature of conflicts and conflict management framework of the Nigerian Baptist Convention;
- (iv) study the extent to which church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention make use of social media in mediatively resolving conflicts, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence; and
- (v) examine the plausibility of creating a framework for the deployment of the use of social media among church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention in mediatively resolving conflicts, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence.

1.4. Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- (i) What is the relationship between the philosophy of peaceful coexistence and the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations?
- (ii) In what ways does theology support mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members?
- (iii) Of what nature and types are the conflicts managed by church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
- (iv) To what extent do church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention use social media to mediatively resolve conflicts?

- (v) What viable framework can the Nigerian Baptist Convention church pastors adopt to encourage the deployment of social media in mediative dialogue?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research would contribute to expanding knowledge of conflict resolution, (in general) and using the means of mediative dialogue (in particular), thereby promoting peaceful coexistence in the society. The research would also contribute to expanding knowledge of the use of social media in mediatively resolving conflicts. Outputs of the research would support the theological reflection on mediative dialogue by church members and church leaders as they find ways to resolve conflicts amicably. The research would also enlighten stakeholders in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, in particular and faith-based organizations in general, on peaceful and non-violent societies as one of the blueprints of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and highlight the importance of other blueprints and the need to achieve these goals before 2030. The study would also help other researchers delve further into areas covered in this study to come up with new findings as events evolve.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on using social media in mediative dialogue as a means of conflict resolution among pastors of churches and other stakeholders in Baptist Associations within Ibadan city. Since there are many categories of social media, only Facebook and Twitter as social network services (SNS) and WhatsApp and Telegram as instant messaging apps are focused on in the study. This focuses on how peaceful and non-violent societies as one of the blueprints of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations can be achieved. The time frame for this research is between 2010 and 2020.

1.7. Limitations to the Study

Most church pastors of the Baptist churches in Ibadan metropolis are male. Most female pastors are either “associate” pastors or pastors of an arm of the church in many of the Baptist churches, thereby being under the authority of a “senior pastor”. Therefore, it was difficult to find female pastors as “senior pastors” to authoritatively speak on how they have been, or will be, using the social media to mediatively resolve conflicts among their church members. Nonetheless, some of these female associate pastors were interviewed during the study.

As an insider (an ordained pastor of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and a ministerial staff in its headquarters), this researcher proposed acting as a participant-observer in the mediative dialogue processes the church pastors employ. However, most of the pastors interviewed were not ready to disclose some personal information to their church members talkless of allowing this researcher to participate in or observe their mediative dialogue processes. This limited this researcher to only what the pastors revealed during the interview sessions and some documents this researcher could interact with independently.

COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant physical distancing affected the interactions of this researcher as the researcher related with the pastors he interviewed during the study. However, some pastors that could not host the researcher physically opted for interviews by WhatsApp Messenger.

1.8. Operational Definitions of Terms

For this study, this researcher gives simple operational and technical definitions of these terms:

Church: Many people understand “church” to refer to a building used for public Christian worship. However, it means more than that from the biblical point of view. The church may refer to a denomination or a recognized autonomous branch of the Christian faith. For this study, the church is the gathering or assembly of people that are referred to as Christians for worship and other Christian religious activities.

Communication: Communication is the process of sharing thoughts, ideas or values in such a way as to have an effect on the recipient’s life.

Conciliation: This is an art of appointing a professional to settle a dispute by persuading the conflicting parties to reach an agreement or proposing a solution to end a conflict.

Conflict: Various groups of people have views on what conflict means. Nevertheless, for this research, conflict simply is a clash of interests, different values, opinions, needs, interests, or a serious disagreement or argument between two or more people that may lead to violence, war, and lack of peace.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution simply is a process of resolving disputes or disagreements. It aims at finding a peaceful solution or middle ground to warring factions. It sometimes involves negotiation, mediation, or diplomacy.

Conflict Transformation: Since many scholars agree that conflict transformation can be better explained than defined, a scholar explained that conflict transformation

is a way of *looking* as well as *seeing*.... to *envision and respond* to the *ebb and flow* of social conflict as *life-giving opportunities* for creating *constructive change processes* that *reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures*, and respond to real-life problems in *human relationships*¹⁷.

This researcher agrees with the explanation of this scholar and adopts it as his operational definition of conflict transformation.

Dialogue: Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people where participants deliberately commit themselves to listen, reflect and question with a curious approach to seek a shared understanding.

Faith-Based Organizations: These are organizations whose values are based on a particular faith or belief and have a mission based on social values of that faith or belief. Faith-Based organizations draw their activities and actors (like leaders, workers, volunteers). The efforts of faith-based organizations are usually directed toward meeting their members' spiritual, social, and cultural needs.

Mediatee: a person (or a conflicting party) in a conflict situation who has accepted that a third party (a mediator) assists (or mediates) in a conflicting situation in order to reach an agreeable give-and-take resolution.

Mediation: Mediation is simply an intervention to resolve a conflict between two or more disagreeing parties. It is a procedure in which an impartial mediator helps conflicting parties through constructive discussion and negotiation of the contending issue to reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Mediative Dialogue: Mediative Dialogue is an art of mediating between two or more conflicting parties by conversing separately with each party through constructive discussion and negotiation of the contending issue to make the contending groups reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Mediator: an intermediary or a third party that is called to help the conflicting parties resolve their conflict in a formal or informal mediation process.

Nigerian Baptist Convention: Baptists are a set of Christians who form a major branch of Protestant Christianity distinguished by baptizing professing believers only and doing so by complete immersion. The Nigerian Baptist Convention is a group of Christians of the Baptist faith mostly in Nigeria that come together to cooperate in fulfilling the mandate of the Great Commission preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, in taking care and in developing churches to be involved in all-inclusive ministries of evangelism, social services and healing, and by cooperating with other Christian organizations throughout the world.

Pastor: A local Baptist church pastor is a called, trained and possibly ordained person that is “called” by the local church to be the spiritual and administrative leader of the church. This is in contrast to other pastors or ministers of the gospel who are denominational workers, missionaries/evangelists and teachers/lecturers in Bible colleges and theological seminaries.¹⁸ In churches that practice full or partial multi-staff ministry (that is, where there is more than one full-time or part-time pastor), the head pastor (or senior pastor) is simply referred to here as the pastor while the other supporting pastors are referred to as associate pastors. These associate pastors may specifically be in charge of an aspect of the church like evangelism and missions, education, music, youth, children, and others.

Peace: For this research, peace is a concord, or harmony and tranquillity within oneself, among two or more people, or in the society at large.

Peacebuilding (or Peace Building): Peacebuilding (or peace building) is the act of tackling the cause of conflict, the aftermath of the conflict, and how to promote lasting stability and justice and improve the conditions of life of people affected by the conflict.

Social Media: Social media are user-based online media (websites and applications) that focus on making online communities of people who share interests and activities, or that have interest in exploring the interests and activities of others. These are sorts of quasi-websites in the form of forums, groups, blogs and the likes¹⁹. They are online tools that have been created to engage people, motivate and encourage them to be better people and create better livelihoods for themselves as they communicate and share information. These services are used mostly interchangeably with the term social media. Scholars and other users of the term “social media” disagree with treating the term as singular or plural in meaning and usage. This researcher also uses the term both ways in this study. Instant Messaging Apps are forms of social media that have unique ways of sharing information in text messages, pictures, audio and video clips used with smartphones and other technological tools that support them.

Sustainability: There have been disagreements about the generally accepted definition of sustainability²⁰. This researcher agrees with a scholar that defined sustainability as “seeking a balance between two or more ideas, occurrences, or phenomena”²¹. In addition, this sought balance must meet present needs without compromising the future needs²⁰. Sustainable development has been defined as “the harmonization of ideas, resources and potentials for meeting human goals for development, while retaining the ability of natural systems to utilize natural resources and services for the economy to thrive”²². Meanwhile, the Sustainable Development Goals are described as “...the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”²³. These goals focus on “the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice”²³.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Review

The conceptual framework of this research is based on some of the concepts that have been reviewed below. These concepts include the nature of conflict and conflict resolution, nature and principle of mediation, The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (especially peace), conflict resolution and social media, and a brief introduction to the Nigerian Baptist Convention in relation to conflict resolution (especially mediation). This chapter also includes the theoretical framework, review of previous empirical works, and synthesis of gaps identified.

2.1.1. Nature of Conflict and Conflict Resolution

As reflected in a quotation by a philosopher, “Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it”, sustainable peace through mediative dialogue does not exist in a vacuum¹. Sustainable peace through mediative dialogue is applied in conflict situations. Therefore, it is expedient to review the nature of conflict and other related terms.

2.1.1.1. Conflict

It is difficult to give an accurate definition of conflict because conflict is multifarious and dependent upon its context or usage, and peace researchers disagree on the meaning of its concept^{2, 3}. However, two scholars gave an etymological background to the word “conflict”⁴. They asserted that the word originated from “a Latin word called *confligere*, which means to clash or to engage in a fight or a battle over certain things, goals, or values”⁴. This Latin word “...connotes a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends”⁵.

Many scholars prefer to describe conflict with scenarios rather than simply define it. Therefore, two scholars described a conflict as “a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals”⁶. Another scholar regarded conflict “as state of disharmony or disagreement between two or more oppositions which can arise in any social institution, religion inclusive”⁷. Two researchers rather described conflict from its causes as “a disagreement, controversy or quarrel between two or more people or groups of people”⁸. As a conflict (apart from intrapersonal conflict) has been identified as something that happens between parties, these parties according to some scholars could be “individuals, groups, communities or state...”⁹. Viewing conflict as something that is “inextricable” in any relationship, another two scholars described conflict as “an interactive state in which the behaviors or goals of one actor are at some degree incompatible with the behaviors or goals of some other actor or actors”¹⁰. A faith-based relief services manual has a similar definition of conflict: “disagreement or struggle between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals”¹¹. To another researcher, conflict is viewed as “an inevitable product of cohabitation or co-existence of individuals or people in society struggling for limited values or resources as against countless desires”¹².

This researcher would prefer this definition of conflict by a scholar: “the condition under which there are actors in pursuit, and-or defense, of incompatible goals”¹³. This definition is preferred against the backdrop of another similar definition of conflict by two researchers with an analysis. The definition is: “a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns”¹⁴. Its analysis is: one, conflict is a disagreement; two, parties are involved in any conflict (with the exception of intrapersonal conflicts); three, the threat is perceived in the conflict; and four, needs, interests, or concerns are involved in the conflict¹⁴. A psychologist has opined that “conflict may range from the use of physical force to litigation to intimidation through threat of physical harm”⁷.

As highlighted by a scholar, conflict usually involves the use of force or violence, creation of a rift in relations between the conflicting parties, and possibly high risks or dangers at the end of the day¹⁵. In relation to peace, two scholars recently defined conflict as “the inability of people to sustain and maintain peaceful and harmonious coexistence during social interactions”¹⁶.

Conflict can emerge at any time. Conflict is normal. It is unavoidable. It is “an inherent part of human nature” and “a phenomenon that is an important part of human existence and a natural part of our daily lives”^{17, 18}. As noted by two researchers, “conflicts are becoming more common, complex, and destructive with no single approach appearing, currently, to be working effectively”¹⁴. The world is a violent place full of many crises, conflicts and wars¹⁹. These conflicts arise because of various political, economic, religious, marital, personal, and other reasons like “divergences of interests, desires, goals and values aspirations in the competition for resources to meet imposing demands on social life in a defined socio-physical environment”²⁰.

Similarly, in the words of a researcher, “Conflicts do not just emerge *ex nihilo*. For every conflict situation, there is always a political, economic and socio-cultural context upon which such conflict manifests and hitches”²¹. Two scholars succinctly put it this way: “Differences in interests are one of the factors that can trigger conflict”²². Conflicts can even take place within a man¹⁸. This is referred to as intrapersonal conflict.

Human survival in this world hinges on how one manages the various features of conflict that is fuelled by these seemingly incompatible interests and values²². An expert in conflict transformation admitted that conflict interrupts or distracts and stops people’s common decision-making procedure through established and often unchallenged suppositions concerning what people, events, and issues mean. This thereby opens people up to inquiry since people’s “assumed understanding has been disrupted”²³.

A scholar has asserted that conflict “is a social phenomenon interwoven with other social institutions like politics, economy, religion, and culture of a given society”²⁴. Despite this assertion and the fact that a psychologist viewed a conflict as “both a creative and a destructive force” or “ethically neutral” as another scholar put it, and two scholars opined that “conflict serves as an indicator of change or the need for change,” yet many scholars view conflict as something that always brings negative or bad results ^{25, 26, 4}. Many scholars with this opinion identified conflict with its multidimensional consequences as “an obstacle to progress, economic growth, political stability and overall socio-economic development”⁸. Two scholars referred to this argument as positive conflicts and negative conflicts²¹. In their argument, positive conflicts are agents of change, a means of compelling people to bring about better ideas, a pursuit for new tactics or options, or making use of age-old challenges and finding ways to tackle them. In contrast, the two scholars opined that negative conflicts are a situation of uneasiness or tension brought about by persons venting two or more needs or desires that are irreconcilable²⁷.

Nevertheless, while conflict, as described by a scholar quoted by another researcher, is “inevitable and a latent reality present in every culture,” another scholar asserted that conflicts “are neither positive nor negative, neither inevitable nor necessarily disastrous in their consequences”^{28, 29}. Against the backdrop that “the degree, approach, and skills in handling conflict ... vary from person to person,” the handling of conflict situation will determine its outcome, whether positive or negative³⁰. A conflict that is constructively and peacefully dealt with will likely bring positive transformation, while a conflict that is dealt with violently will likely bring negative consequences³¹.

Nonetheless, there are positive outcomes that individuals involved in conflicts can be derived as conflicts “can foster inventive issue solving and improving the situation for all parties involved” in the conflicts³². Two scholars highlighted these positive consequences

thus: reconciliation of the interests of the disputing parties; a sharpened sense of identity and solidarity; interaction at interpersonal levels; the prospect of making adjustments in one's positions; and possible identification and addressing of the real problem³³. More benefits of conflict are enumerated by a scholar: "solidification of a loosely structured group, enhancement of power, diversification of the economy, technological progress, and acquisition of new allies. In most cases, conflicts contribute to the third side benefit, i.e. powerful countries aiming to keep a certain control in the region"³⁴. Furthermore, two scholars thought that "conflict presents challenges but also presents rich opportunities for improved relationships and problem solving"¹⁰. While to the Chinese, conflict is neither positive nor negative, but an occasion for change, conflict is perceived as a negative phenomenon in Nigeria, so, it has to be treated with a strict mindset of crushing and destruction⁴.

A psychologist identified and explained ten ways that make conflicts thrive in people. These ways are:

- 1) conflict defines people and gives meaning to their lives;
- 2) conflict gives people energy;
- 3) conflict ennoble people's misery;
- 4) conflict safeguards people's personal space;
- 5) conflict creates intimacy;
- 6) conflict covers up people's weaknesses;
- 7) conflict powerfully communicates what people honestly feel;
- 8) conflict gets results;
- 9) conflict makes people feel righteous; and
- 10) conflict prompts change²⁵.

These identified ways work both positively and negatively for conflict and its resolution.

Four different types of conflicts have been identified thus: intra-personal (conflict within an individual), intra-group (conflict within a group), inter-personal (conflict between two or more people), and Inter-group (conflict between two or more groups)¹¹. Furthermore, other two scholars identified and explained six different basic types of conflicts thus: intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intragroup conflict, intergroup conflict, intra-organizational conflict, and inter-organizational conflicts³⁵. Conflicts can be caused by a variety of things. It may be a conflict of interests when two or more parties want to achieve something from a different situation with high compatibility of goals and needs; it may be a conflict of needs centred around essential things we must have like food, water, shelter, clothing, and security; it may be a conflict of values, that is, clash over ideas, morality, religion or beliefs, human right standards, and tradition; it may be a conflict of identities like race (being a member of a minority), sex (being a man or a woman), nationality, tribe and the likes; it may be ideological or worldview conflicts like a disagreement over political ideologies (for example, communism, capitalism, and holy war); it may be conflicts of esteem and judgment especially when it has to do with decision making³⁶.

Culture plays a crucial role in any conflict because it forms one's beliefs, standards and methods in managing conflict³⁷. A scholar has listed culture as one of the social institutions that affect conflict as a social phenomenon²⁴. Culture has been described as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, customs law and other capabilities which are learned shared by men as members of society and transmitted from one generation to another"³⁸. It is also defined as "the sum of the beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artefacts that characterize human populations"³⁹. Culture is likened to underground rivers that run through people's lives and relationships, giving them messages that shape their perceptions, attributions, judgements and ideas of self and the other⁴⁰. It is always an element in conflict, whether it plays a vital role or influences conflict faintly and

mildly⁴⁰. Deliberations of cultural disparity in mediation have centred mainly on ethnicity. People from various cultural backgrounds have fashioned numerous means of making and communicating as well as understanding and managing conflict⁴¹. Two scholars had opined that culture is able to play a positive role in the mediation of international conflicts⁴². Likewise, another scholar studied the correlations of conflict resolution across cultures⁴³. Against this backdrop, other scholars wrote extensively on the impacts of cultural differences in conflicts and mediation^{44, 45}.

Some basic stages of conflict have been affirmed. These stages are “latent, manifest, crisis and de-escalation stages”⁴⁶. Conflict is at the latent stage is when it is yet to surface, but there is a rising consciousness of the conflict. Conflict is in the manifest stage is when its face starts with low-level violence. Conflict at the crisis stage represents its highest point with unguarded antagonism between the conflicting parties. The last stage, the de-escalation stage, is divided into two stages: the improvement and the transformation stages. These stages are when a third party intervene in the conflict, and the contending groups start to recognize the views and concerns of the other party, and efforts are being made to change the approaches of the conflicting parties to the conflict, thereby paving ways for conflict transformation⁴⁶. Some scholars present these stages of conflict in Figure 2.1 below.

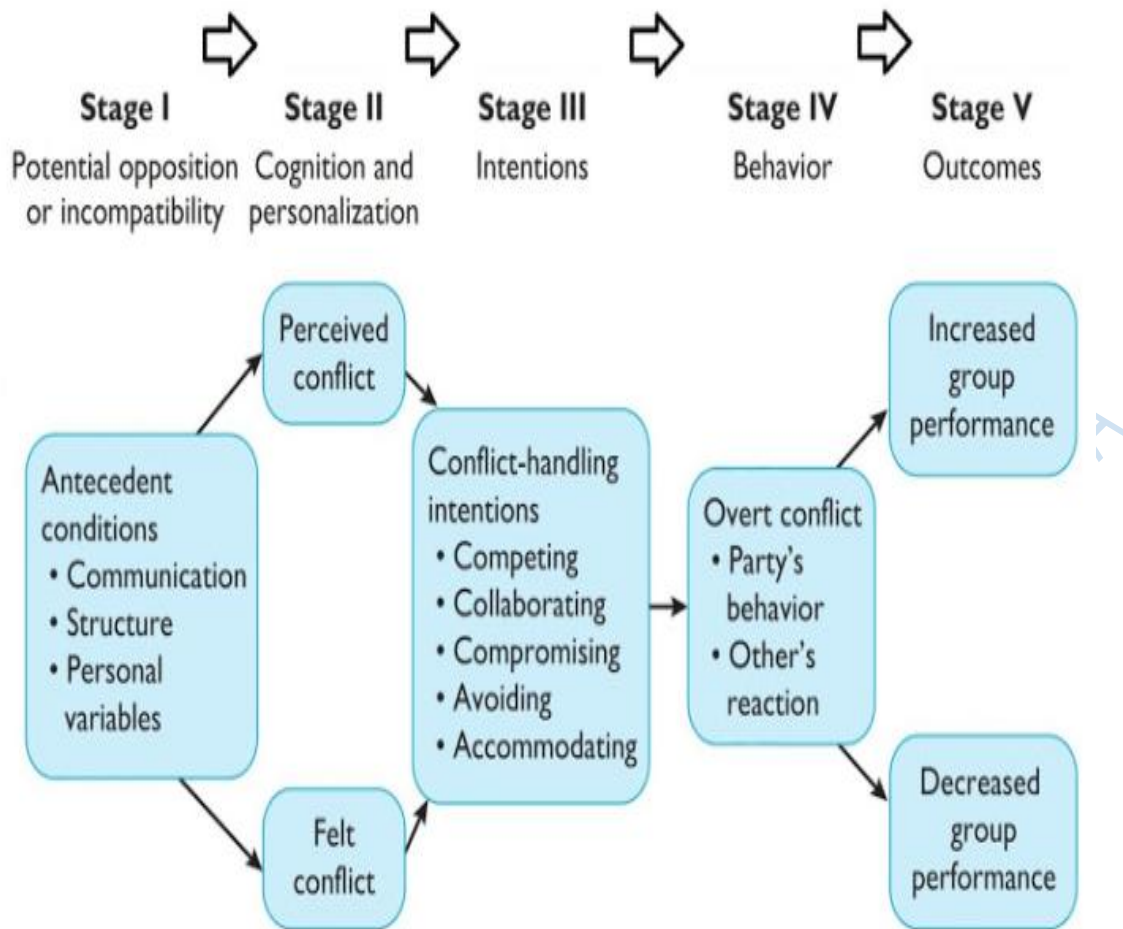


Figure 2.1: Five Stages of Conflict Process⁴⁷

Another scholar has come up with what the scholar referred to as “Levels of Conflict”, commonly known as “Speed Leas’ Levels of Conflict Model”⁴⁸. These levels comprise Level Zero: Depression, Level One: A Problem to Solve, Level Two: Disagreement, Level Three: Contest, Level Four: Fight/Flight, and Level Five: Intractable Situations⁴⁹. The levels are represented in Figure 2.2 below.

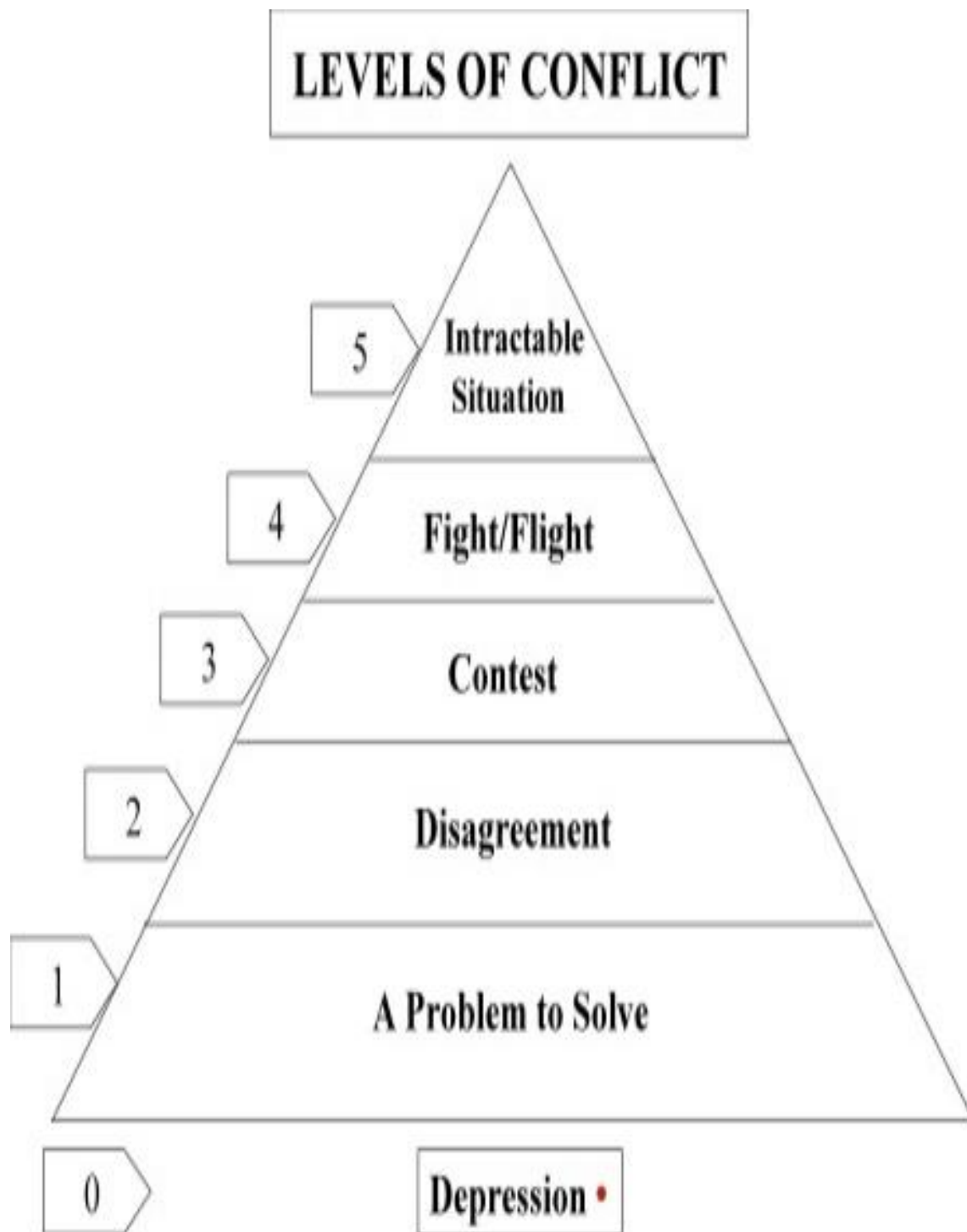


Figure 2.2: Speed Leas' Levels of Conflict⁴⁹

The levels with their symptoms and strategies are better explained in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Speed Leas Levels of Conflict Model⁵⁰

Level	Symptoms	Strategy
Level I Problem to solve	Objective of those involved: fix the problem Tone/behaviors: optimistic, collaborative, problem not person focus, rational; language is clear, specific, here and now, adult; real differences over goals, values, needs, plans, information; people understand each other and disagree.	1. Facilitate decision making by <u>collaborative problem solving</u> , or if not possible, by negotiation, or if not possible, by <u>formal authority action</u> (by voting or leader decision.) 2. Methods -- establish meeting norms, use a facilitator and a disciplined process, brainstorm and prioritize, use communication skills, etc.
Level II Disagreement	Objectives: self protection, not getting hurt; solve the problem Tone/behaviors: cautious, not hostile; general language to protect people and self, e.g., "there is no trust", "we need more openness;" hostile humor, distancing comments; withhold information that might serve the other side or damage your side.	Need is to keep people close enough to work though their differences , not engage in withdrawal or begin to get aggressive. 1. Reduce tension and facilitate people's work together. Encourage people to "hang in," attend and prepare for meetings; coach people to act, to be assertive, help people fully express their concerns and to listen to the concerns of others; provide ways to build relationships, ways for people to know each other as people, to speak with each other about common interests and needs. 2. Methods -- role reversal, expectations clarification, paraphrase and itemized response, brainstorm and prioritize, use facilitator, etc. 2. <u>Establish ground rules</u> -- get agreement about how we will work on the issue, e.g., no threats, identify sources of information, direct sharing of differences, no personal attacks, no withdrawing; norms for meetings, etc. 3. <u>Make decisions</u> -- collaborative problem solving --- negotiation -- formal authority.
Level III Contest	Objective: win, not yet at level of wanting to hurt the opponent Tone/behaviors: win/lose dynamics, threatening, difficult, resistance to peace overtures, hanging back waiting for others to show weakness, personal	The overall need is to reduce fear and distorted thinking; to provide a sense of order. 1. All the strategies mentioned for Level II, as possible. 2. Structure the process -- work out a clear process; dates of meetings, time lines, etc. Revise it as needed; but work

	attacks, emotional appeals, limited social contact; language is distorted - overgeneralized ("you always...", "everyone..."), exaggerated, making a case, expecting magic or rapid change, expecting others to read your mind, extreme, only two sides, lose the shade/gray.	at maintaining a sense of order and direction. There is a high need for a process that is seen as fair, open, and legal. 3. <u>Use an external consultant</u> 4. <u>Contact between parties to the conflict needs to be carefully managed</u> -- opportunities for people to express feelings and clarify their interests need to be provided for each side; this usually needs to first be done apart from the other side; when they are ready to work together, then have a carefully facilitated meeting. 5. <u>Decision making</u> -- the same sequence as at other levels; however, the more persuasion, compelling and voting the more likely that people will leave the organization. More tension will require more structure. 1. <u>Use an external consultant/mediator</u> -- this <i>cannot</i> be someone from the central office. 2. Follow the book -- legal issues may be involved, trust is very low; follow the organization's standards. 3. <u>Communicate through third parties</u> -- seek an agreement for third parties to serve as "go-betweens" to carry messages, look for possible areas of agreement, Most likely to be useful when the issue is clear. 4. <u>Be tougher about the ground rules</u> -- enforce expectations about personal attacks, loaded language; might have a group that monitors agreements and gives feedback to violators. 5. <u>Decision making</u> -- likely to be by formal authority. Some are likely to leave. The conflict is no longer manageable. - Outside authority will need to make difficult decisions. - The parties need to be separated. - Some relationships will need to be terminated.
Level IV Fight/Flight	Objectives: hurt/get rid of the others; being "right" Tone/behaviors: factions inflexible, clear lines, strong leaders emerge; language becomes ideological -- about principles, truth, rights; parties detached, causing each to lose sense of the pain they cause; attempt to enlist outsiders in the cause, parties will not speak with each other, self-righteous, cold	
Level V Intractable Situation	Objective: destroy the others Tone/behaviors: attempts to do serious damage to the other's reputation, position, well being; attempts may continue after the parties have been separated	

Conflicts have many adverse effects on the society. Conflicts are considered to be "obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic

development of any society because of its destructive impact”⁵¹. Two scholars briefly explained some of the effects of conflicts on Nigerian society. The effects include, but are not limited to: threats to human life, adverse effects of food productivity, and adverse effects on the economy¹⁸. The emergence of food insecurity caused by conflicts and how the government can tackle it was the focus of recent research⁵². A major recommendation of the research is e-government through social media⁵².

2.1.1.2. Conflict Resolution

The term conflict resolution became prominent in the last two decades when the Cold War ended and many civil wars started in eastern and southern Europe and many conflicts in Africa made scholars and analysts elucidate the shifting nature of war and how to end it⁵³. In the words of a scholar, “Conflicts are resolved when both conflicting parties are satisfied with the outcome of the resolution in terms of their basic needs being met and all fear dismantled”⁵⁴. In corroboration of this simple definition of conflict resolution, another scholar opined, “the concept of conflict resolution can be thought to encompass the use of nonviolent resistance measures by conflicted parties in an attempt to promote effective resolution”⁵⁵. So, the focus of conflict resolution can be summed on “the deep-rooted causes of conflict, including structural, behavioral, and above all, attitudinal aspects” or simply “to achieve or promote peace”^{56, 57}.

Conflict resolution – also known, according to a researcher, as “reconciliation” and “dispute resolution” – has to do with all the procedure that aims at tackling the fundamental causes of direct, cultural, and structural violence^{55, 58}. This process ranges “from negotiation to diplomacy, from mediation to arbitration, from facilitation to adjudication, from conciliation to conflict prevention, from conflict management to conflict transformation, from restorative justice to peacekeeping”⁵⁹. Some of these terms are discussed later in this review.

Some scholars explained the five steps usually involved in a long-term dialogue process as part of conflict resolution. These steps are convening, clarifying responsibilities, deliberation, decision, and signing⁵⁹. More is discussed on this under mediative dialogue below.

Furthermore, a psychologist highlighted ten propositions to explain “the constantly changing, highly intuitive, subtle character of conflict resolution and its potential as a means of transformation and transcendence”²⁵. These propositions are:

- 1) no two human beings are the same;
- 2) no single human being is the same from one moment to the next;
- 3) the interactions and relationships between human beings are complex, multi-determined, subtle, and unpredictable;
- 4) conflicts are even more complex, multi-determined, subtle, and unpredictable;
- 5) most conflicts take place below the surface;
- 6) chronic conflicts are systemic;
- 7) every conflict is holographic;
- 8) every conflict reveals an internal crossroad;
- 9) every conflict offers opportunities to evolve; and
- 10) at the center of every conflict lies its heart²⁵.

In addition to these, because of the variance between position and concern is valuable in conflict resolution, some principles and steps have to be taken in handling conflict in the opinion of a renowned expert in conflict resolution²⁵. These principles and steps are:

- 1) identifying and defining the problem;
- 2) creating the appropriate opportunity for treating issues;
- 3) allowing different opinions to be presented;
- 4) documenting diversity by allowing people to talk;

5) exploring the gifts in the community; and

6) deciding upon and implementing decisions taken⁶⁰.

A conflict resolver must bear all these propositions, principles and steps in mind as he tries to resolve any conflict and possibly transform the conflict situation into a peaceful one. Two scholars attempted to relate the concept of *Ubuntu*, “an African humanist ideology,” with the pursuit for conflict resolution in Africa⁶¹. The conclusion of these scholars is that observance of the philosophies of *Ubuntu* by state and nonstate actors would significantly lessen threats to peace and security in Africa⁶¹.

A researcher has chronicled the evolution of “the field of contemporary conflict resolution (CR)”⁶². According to him, conflict resolution evolved from the human attempts to resolve conflicts that have been with human beings from time immemorial. As conflicts arose, means were explored to resolve them. There have been “many traditional conflict resolution methods” before the contemporary conflict resolution approaches emerged as a “defined specialist field”^{63, 64}. Another peace practitioner also reviewed the development of “practice of peace negotiations” from ancient to modern time⁶⁵. Many people propagated many theories of conflict resolution. Among these people were “Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Adam Smith (1723-1790), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), and James Madison (1751-1836)”⁶². Others were Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924). Many organizations were involved (and still are involved) in conflict resolution means. Notable among these organizations are Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) (that metamorphosed to the International Fellowship of Reconciliation [IFOR]), the United Nations (UN), “the European Coal and Steel Community, which was established in 1952 and was the forerunner of the European Union”, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS), the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), and the Stockholm International Peace

Research Institute (SIPRI)⁶². Others are the National Institute of Dispute Resolution, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the Hessische Stiftung Friedens und Konfliktforschung (HSFK), the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), The Arbeitsstelle Friedensforschung Bonn (AFB) or Peace Research Information Unit (PRIU), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW), the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa), and so on⁶².

Undoubtedly, many people and organizations are involved (and are still involved) in conflict resolution, especially here in Nigeria. Notable among the people are Prof. Isaac Olawale Albert, Rev. Dr Israel Adelani Akanji, and Archbishop John Cardinal Onaiyekan⁶⁶. Among the organizations in Nigeria are the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), the Society for Peace Study and Practice (SPSP), the Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN), Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Initiative (CPPBI) and others.

A scholar thereby gave some reasons for studying peace and conflict studies. Among these reasons are:

- 1) It enables one to examine the causes and prevention of war.
- 2) It enables students and researchers to examine the nature of violence, oppression, discrimination, marginalization, gender inequality etcetera as well as the factors that exacerbate or trigger conflict.
- 3) It enables students to have the knowledge about non-violent strategies in resolving conflict and its application on the day activities and during human interaction.
- 4) It also aims at teaching students about how to resist violence through promoting principle of human freedom, dignity, equality and rule of law amongst others...⁶⁷.

2.1.1.3. Conflict Transformation

As said by a scholar, “Since the early 1990s, the concept of conflict transformation emerged as a field of study and practice from within the broader context of conflict resolution”²⁶. Researchers have found it problematic to give exact meaning of the term “conflict transformation”. However, a scholar proposed this definition:

Conflict transformation is *to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships*⁴¹.

The scholar purposely italicized some words or phrases in the recommended definition above to make the meaning more comprehensible as the scholar further explained the italicized words or phrases⁴¹. The scholar further discussed that conflict transformation has to do with the way conflict originates and advances and how it can cause changes in the personal, structural, relational, and cultural levels for the mediator to encourage peaceful change by peaceful means⁶⁸. Many other researchers instead explain the term using expressions like process, theory, approach, task, principles, and the like. As a process, conflict transformation involves “with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict. Constructive conflict is seen as a vital agent or catalyst for change”⁶⁹.

Conflict transformation goes beyond the conflict itself as it concentrates on the conflict and takes note of the people involved in the conflict⁷⁰. A systemic approach to conflict transformation was extensively discussed in a book⁷¹. Some principles of conflict transformation are given thus:

1. Conflict should not be regarded as an isolated event that can be resolved or managed, but as an integral part of society’s on-going evolution and development;
2. Conflict should not be understood solely as an inherently negative and destructive occurrence, but rather as a potentially positive and productive force for change if harnessed constructively;

3. Conflict transformation goes beyond merely seeking to contain and manage conflict, instead seeking to transform the root causes themselves - or the perceptions of the root causes - of a particular conflict;
4. Conflict transformation is a long-term, gradual and complex process, requiring sustained engagement and interaction;
5. Conflict transformation is not just an approach and set of techniques, but a way of thinking about and understanding conflict itself;
6. Conflict transformation is particularly suited for intractable conflicts, where deep-rooted issues fuel protracted violence;
7. Conflict transformation adjusts to the ever changing nature of a conflict, particularly during pre- and post-violence phases and at any stage of the escalation cycle;
8. Conflict transformation is always a non-violent process, which is fundamentally opposed to violent expressions of conflict;
9. Conflict transformation addresses a range of dimensions - the micro-, meso- and macrolevels; local and global;
10. Conflict transformation is concerned with five specific types of transformation, focusing upon the structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict:
 - a. **Actors** – modifying actors’ goals and their approach to pursuing these goals, including by strengthening understanding as to the causes and consequences of their respective actions;
 - b. **Contexts** – challenging the meaning and perceptions of conflict itself, particularly the respective attitudes and understandings of specific actors towards one another;
 - c. **Issues** – redefining the issues that are central to the prevailing conflict, and reformulating the position of key actors on those very issues;
 - d. **Rules** – changing the norms and rules governing decision-making at all levels in order to ensure that conflicts are dealt with constructively through institutional channels;
 - e. **Structures** – adjusting the prevailing structure of relationships, power distributions and socio-economic conditions that are embedded in and inform the conflict, thereby affecting the very fabric of interaction between previously incompatible actors, issues and goals.
11. For conflict transformation to occur, tensions between parties to the conflict must be overcome – first, by ensuring all actors recognize that their respective interests are not served by resorting to violence; and second, by seeking consensus on what should be transformed and how;

12. Conflict transformation stresses the human dimension by reminding parties of the compatible nature of their needs, instead of emphasizing their opposing interests, and by rejecting unilateral decisions and action, particularly those representing a victory for one of the parties to the conflict;
13. Conflict transformation does not resort to a predetermined set of approaches and actions, but respects and adapts to the particularities of a given setting;
14. Conflict transformation looks beyond visible issues and is characterized by creative problemsolving, incorporating the perspectives a broad array of actors, including those typically marginalized from such considerations;
15. Conflict transformation invariably involves a third, impartial party, in order to help actors alter their cognitive and emotional views on the 'Other', thereby helping to break down divisions between 'Us' and 'Them';
16. Conflict transformation represents an ambitious and demanding task, which is better equipped to contend with the asymmetric, complex and protracted nature of contemporary conflicts than prevailing techniques and approaches⁷².

In elucidating the task of conflict transformation, a scholar thought that involving in conflict transformation is more than putting an end to a conflict. It pursues looking backwards to the roots of conflict and looking ahead into what and how things should be, so that there will be less repetition of past violence to ensure peaceful co-existence⁷³.

As a theory, apart from the fact that conflict transformation "widens views on the conflict, conflicting parties and the possibility of drawing peace building resources from the wider society", it is also seen as part of a process or approach of conflict resolution ^{73, 70}. This process or approach is summarized thus:

1. Map the conflict formation: all parties, all goals, and all issues;
2. Bring in forgotten parties with important stakes in the conflict;
3. Have highly empathic dialogues with all parties singly;
4. Each conflict worker may specialize on one conflict party;
5. In these dialogues identify acceptable goals in all parties;
6. Bring in forgotten goals that may open new perspectives;
7. Arrive at overarching goals acceptable to all parties;
8. Arrive at short, evocative, goal-formulations;
9. Help define the tasks for all parties with that goal in mind;
disembedding the conflict from where it was,

- embedding it elsewhere,
bringing in forgotten parties, goals;
10. Verify how realizing that goal would realize parties' goals;
 11. Help parties meet at the table for self-sustaining process;
 12. Withdraw from the conflict, go on to the next, being on call⁷⁴.

“Four Dimensions of Conflict Transformation” (also known as “the Four Dimensions of Change”) have been identified. In relation to these dimensions, conflict affects people and societies, starting from personal to relational to structural and cultural levels. At the personal (individual and interior) level, there are emotional, intellectual and spiritual changes. At the relational level, there are changes in direct interactions between people in communication, prejudices, and trust. At the structural level, there are changes in structures and systems (family, community, society) affecting access, power, and decisions. At the cultural level, there are changes in norms and values that guide behaviour¹¹.

For conflict transformation to have occurred, three outcomes should be evident, as highlighted by some scholars. These outcomes are:

1. Transformation of the parties' attitudes. Illustrated by a change in perceptions of the conflicting parties, based on a commitment to view each other in a spirit of goodwill and mutual respect.
2. Transformation of the parties' behaviour. Parties would focus on collaborative behaviour, this includes in communication, committing to mutually beneficial actions.
3. Transformation of the conflict. Parties, by attempting to remove incompatibilities, can pursue mutual gains⁷⁵.

2.1.1.4. Conflict Management

Although conflict management and conflict resolution are often used synonymously in many literatures, there are some distinctions between these two terminologies⁷⁶. Both are

two means at different sides of a field that are used to deal with the same conflicts but at different stages of these conflicts. While conflict management, also known as “conflict regulation”, is a practical way of averting conflicts, conflict resolution has to do with methods employed after a conflict has occurred^{77, 76}. Conflict management is simply the prospect of making a conflict situation better and making the relationship stronger⁷⁸. Conflict management is the use of resolution and inspiration methods to control the level and influence of disrupting conflict within a unit while using the more positive and helpful aspects of the relationship, cooperation and conciliation⁷⁹. Conflict management has also been described as “a process of managing conflict by compiling a number of strategies carried out by the conflicting parties so as to get the desired resolution of the conflict”⁵⁷. It has also been defined as “the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict”⁸⁰. There is a variation of conflict management means like “compromising, competing, avoiding, collaborating, or accommodating based on self-interest or the interests of others”⁸¹. This variation is represented in the “Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model”, as shown in Figure 2.3 ⁸².

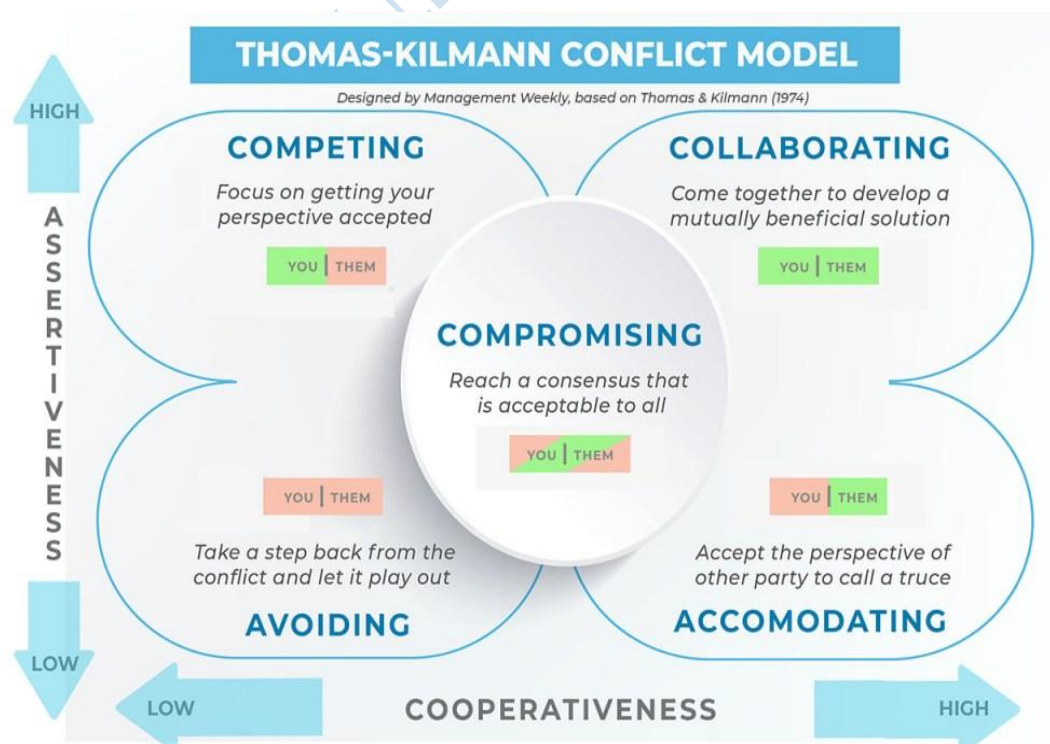


Figure 2.3: Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model⁸²

Scholars have identified four key levels of conflict management. These levels are: “intergroup, intragroup/intra-organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal conflicts”⁸¹. Likewise, a scholar also identified “two sides of the conflict management coin: the side of counterterrorism, espousing exclusivity and manifested by proscription, and the side of mediation, characterised by inclusivity”⁶⁵.

2.1.1.5. Peacebuilding

Although the term “Peacebuilding” (or “Peace Building”) was “... coined by a scholar in 1975 with the publication of ‘Three Approaches to Peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building,’” it came into prominence after the then United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, announced his “Agenda for Peace” in 1992^{83, 84}. Two scholars cited the broad definition of peacebuilding by this former leader of United Nations as,

A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peace building strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized sequence, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives⁸⁵.

Peacebuilding has been described as “the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. Peacebuilding aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict”⁸⁶. A scholar summarized the definition or description of peace building as a process that “comprises of prevention of the reoccurrence of the conflict, management of the conflict and post conflict resurgence”⁵⁴. In the opinion of some other scholars, peacebuilding “revolves around developing constructive individual,

group and political relationships across ethnic, class, religious, racial and national boundaries”⁷⁷. Another scholar defined peacebuilding as “an initiative that promotes peace by addressing the roots of conflict, preventing and mitigating all forms of violence, and fostering just and inclusive societies”⁸⁸.

The process of peacebuilding comprises “the prevention and resolution of violent conflicts, consolidation of peace once violence has been reduced, and post-conflict reconstruction to avoid a relapse into violent conflict”⁸⁷. In relation to peace, a researcher argued,

Peace appears to be an independent variable while building in peacebuilding is a dependent variable. Peace, therefore, is indispensable to peacebuilding, such that without peace, there can be no peacebuilding. In other words, peace is key or the heart of peacebuilding, it is only when there is a peace that one can build on it⁸⁹.

Although peacebuilding is often “misunderstood as the phase of the peace process that *takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping*... [it is rather] an umbrella concept that encompasses not only long-term transformative efforts but also peacemaking and peacekeeping”⁹⁰. Differentiation has been made between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as stated by an online source thus:

Chapter VI of the UN Charter talks about peacemaking as a non-restrictive list of peaceful, diplomatic, and judicial means of resolving disputes. Peacekeeping is situated before peace enforcement and before the sanctions regime as seen in chapter VII of the UN Charter. Peacebuilding is more than a process that has a broad post-conflict agenda and more than an instrumentalist method to secure peace⁹¹.

Specifically, peacekeeping aims “to guarantee the stability of any agreement reached to reduce the likelihood of renewed fighting”⁹². Peacebuilding has been seen as a two-sided process³⁶. One side of the process is the “prevention, reduction or transformation of violent conflict or war and the other [side] is the construction and improvement of existing peaceful structures and activities”³⁶. A difference has been made “between ‘hard’ versus ‘soft’

peacebuilding—one that takes into consideration the realities of post-conflict countries, and the other for democratic or relatively peaceful countries. There is an increasing necessity for soft peacebuilding approaches in conjunction with post-conflict hard peacebuilding”⁹³.

In his opinion, a scholar has said that fruitful peace building activities will:

- create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace;
- reconcile opponents;
- prevent resumption of conflicts;
- integrate civil society;
- create rule of law mechanisms; and,
- address underlying structural and societal issues⁷⁹.

Some of the strategic peacebuilding principles are:

1. Peacebuilding is complex and has multiple actors.
2. Peacebuilding requires values, goals, commitment to human rights and needs.
3. Peacebuilding goes beyond conflict transformation.
4. Peacebuilding cannot ignore structural forms of injustice and violence.
5. Peacebuilding is founded on an ethic of interdependence, partnership, and limiting violence.
6. Peacebuilding depends on relational skills.
7. Peacebuilding analysis is complex; underlying cultures, histories, root causes, and immediate stressors are essential.
8. Peacebuilding creates spaces where people interact in new ways, expanding experience and honing new means of communication.
9. Peacebuilding heals trauma, promotes justice and transforms relationships.
10. Peacebuilding requires capacity and relationship building at multiple levels⁹⁴.

A scholar has highlighted the importance of peace building. According to him,

- It helps to prevent conflict from escalating
- It creates security and stability in the community
- It restores sanity and harmonious living in the land
- A driving force for sustainable peace and development in the aftermath of conflict
- It helps to build peace in the mind of the people since war starts in the mind.

- It captures a programme of the Rs. which are reconstruction, reformation and reconciliation when effectively implemented and this goes a long way in healing the wound of the war⁶⁷.

2.1.2. Nature and Principle of Mediation

2.1.2.1. Meaning of Mediation

Mediation is one of the ancient methods of conflict resolution⁹⁵. In an attempt to define the word “mediation”, a scholar gave an etymology of “the word *mediate* [that] comes from *mediato*, which in turn comes from the Latin noun *medius* (means) and verb *mediare* (separate into halves)”⁹⁵. The scholar further defined mediation in a dispute as an “intervention of a third party unfamiliar to the conflict, trustable, unbiased and intending to be neutral”⁹⁵. Another scholar corroborated this etymology and meaning of mediation by saying that the term *mediation* is embedded in the Latin word *mediare* that comprises three meanings:

- (i) to divide in two, to separate in two parts;
- (ii) to act as a mediator, an intermediary (to mediate a conflict between enemies);
- (iii) to be between, to be between (two things)⁹⁶.

Another attempt to describe mediation is seen as a method to “conflict resolution that uses a ‘third party’ intermediary to help the disputing parties resolve their conflict”⁹⁶. The “third party” can either be “...an individual, a group, another nation, an organisation or could involve multiple parties, cooperating in either a formalised or an ad hoc manner”⁹⁷. In the opinion of another scholar, mediation “involves one or more structured meetings between disputing parties, chaired by a neutral third person whose purpose is to help them negotiate and hopefully resolve a contentious problem”⁹⁸. Furthermore, some scholars understood a mediation to be “a process (formal or informal) in which a third party, called a mediator, facilitates management of the conflict without having the authority to impose a solution”⁷⁵.

As generally conceived, mediation is a mediator(s)-driven process that conflict parties (or “mediatees”) are to be invited into⁹⁹. Mediation has been practiced, described, studied, prescribed, or proscribed in many areas of life in recent times. These realms include “international, environmental, school, divorce, organizational, consumer, and sexual harassment disputes as well as in other realms”⁹⁵. As asserted by a researcher, mediation “has gained relevance in all kinds of sectors...”¹⁰⁰. For mediation to take place, two processes must mingle. Firstly, the contending groups must ask or allow a third party to mediate, and secondly, the third party must consent to mediate⁹³. In other words, mediation is believed to occur when conflicting parties accept the help of “a third party to resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law”⁹².

Mediation differs from arbitration. In arbitration, the third party decides how the conflict should be resolved. A dispute resolver has given an elaborate explanation of the difference between mediation and arbitration¹⁰¹. Mediation is a key form of conflict resolution known as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)¹⁰². In the explanation of a theologian, as the theologian traced the history of the process in the United States of America, the term Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to “‘alternative’ dispute resolution because it has appeared as a viable alternative to the adversary system, which is the formal name of the American legal system, which has been the normative forum for dealing with disputes in our society”¹⁰³. A scholar explained ADR as

...a broad range of mechanisms and processes designed to supplement the traditional courts litigations by providing more effective and faster resolution process. It is a procedure for the settlement of disputes by means other than confrontational and relationship destroying litigation¹⁰⁴.

Other forms or types of ADR (apart from mediation) as explained by the scholar are arbitration, negotiation, conciliation, and multi-door court house¹⁰⁴. Each of these forms is

related to mediation. An institute has referred to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as “any means of settling disputes other than the court room”¹⁰⁵.

ADR encompasses “various approaches for resolving disputes in a non-confrontational way, ranging from negotiation between the two parties, a multiparty negotiation, through mediation, consensus building, to arbitration and adjudication”¹⁰⁶. Other forms of ADR “include arbitration, mini-trials, early neutral evaluation, private judging and screening panels”¹⁰⁷. Two scholars asserted, “...in the peacebuilding field, it is usual to analyse sets and categories of actors (female peacemakers, young peacebuilders, religious mediators, etc.) and their actions, and to then contextualise them”¹⁰⁸. Likewise, in mediation approach, mediators will identify and analyze the actors or parties involved in the conflict and only help the conflicting parties in their (that is, the parties’) efforts to frame their solution¹⁰⁸. The mediators may bring the contending groups together or sometimes go forth and back between them to “help them describe the problem in terms of negotiable interests and needs rather than non-negotiable positions, and develop a set of ideas for how the interests and needs of both sides can be met simultaneously”¹⁰⁹. Contrary to arbitrators or adjudicators who have the power to instruct an ending to a resolution, mediators have no power to force any decision or settlement on the conflicting parties¹¹⁰.

The word “facilitator” has been used interchangeably with the word “mediator”¹¹¹. Both may refer to the same person, but there is a remarkable difference between the two¹¹¹.

A mediator is a facilitator but a facilitator is not necessarily a trained mediator. In dialogue, it will be useful to have a facilitator with mediation skills. While facilitators do most of their works "at the table" when the parties are meeting face-to-face, mediators are often called upon to work with the parties before, during, and after their face-to-face meetings¹¹¹.

The importance of “the personality of the chief mediator” was brought to the fore as a researcher looked into the influence of a mediator as a third party in some attempts to resolve

some conflicts in Africa by Africans and non-Africans¹¹². Against the backdrop that some scholars believe that some mediators can have much influence to force aftermaths of mediation, these scholars have, thus, creatively invented new terms such as “intravenor” for a mediator. However, other scholars argued that such aftermaths are no longer mediation, or that the aftermaths would have led to other processes beyond mediation¹¹³.

A scholar has elucidated three mediation models: facilitative mediation, shuttle mediation, and evaluative mediation¹¹³. The scholar later gave more explanation on facilitative mediation¹¹³. In likening mediation to nonviolent activism, a scholar gave these points: mediation is connected to all sides in its stance; mediation increases mutual understanding and reduces adversariness in its method; mediation emphasizes hearing the truth; the process of mediation is awareness to dialogue to mutual solutions, and the goal of mediation is social change and better justice through peaceful means¹¹⁴.

Some of the main characteristics of mediation are listed as follows:

1. Mediation is an extension and continuation of peaceful conflict management.
2. Mediation involves the intervention of an outsider – an individual, a group, or an organization – into a conflict between two or more states or other actors.
3. Mediation is a non-coercive, nonviolent and, ultimately, nonbinding form of intervention.
4. Mediators enter a conflict, whether internal or international, in order to affect it, change it, resolve it, modify it, or influence it in some way.
5. Mediators bring with them, consciously or otherwise, ideas, knowledge, resources, and interests of their own or of the group or organization they represent. Mediators often have their own assumptions and agendas about the conflict in question.
6. Mediation is a voluntary form of conflict management. The actors involved retain control over the outcome (if not always over the process) of their conflict, as well as the freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediators’ proposals.
7. Mediation is usually an ad hoc procedure only¹¹⁵.

2.1.2.2. Forms of Mediation

There are some forms of mediation. These forms are identified as models. Consequently, four identified models of mediation that can be used in different jurisdictions and subject areas are facilitative mediation, settlement mediation, transformative mediation, and evaluative mediation¹¹⁶. Facilitative mediation is a situation where the parties are encouraged to negotiate based upon their needs and interests instead of their strict legal rights or “a structured process that assists parties in reaching their own agreements”¹¹³.

In settlement mediation, disputing parties are encouraged to compromise in order to settle the conflicts between them and have a peaceful co-existence¹¹⁷. In transformative mediation, the disputing parties are encouraged to deal with fundamental causes of their problems to mend their relationship as the basis for resolution. It is “successful when something happens to change the way parties relate to each other and understand their respective situations”¹¹⁸.

Evaluative mediation is a situation where parties are encouraged to reach settlement according to their rights and entitlements within the anticipated range of court remedies held by judges¹¹⁹. Many scholars have criticized evaluative mediation because it threatens the neutrality of the mediation process since a mediator’s assessment in this mediation model invariably favours one side over the other¹²⁰.

In the opinion of some scholars, some factors will affect the outcome of mediation. These factors include, but are not limited to, the nature of conflict, the personality of the mediator, and the mediation process itself⁷⁵.

2.1.2.3. Mediative Dialogue

Dialogue has been described as “an interactive conversation between one or more sides working together towards a common understanding”¹¹¹. In the words of a scholar, “The word dialogue is a combination of the two Greek words: dia, meaning ‘through,’ and logos,

interpreted as ‘word or meaning’”²⁹. Therefore, the scholar concluded “to engage in making meaning through the spoken/written word”²⁹. Two researchers gave a more elaborate definition of dialogue as “...an orientation to communicative engagement that prioritizes open communication, mutual understanding, and co-creation of meaning among all individuals as equal partners of a relationship”¹²¹. In the words of a scholar, “The concept of dialogue contains a dimension of simultaneity and direct contact, either physical or via technical aids”⁵.

Dialogue is one of the four identified types of conversation, debate, discourse and diatribe, being the other three¹²². Figure 2.4 shows the relationship between dialogue and other types of conversation.

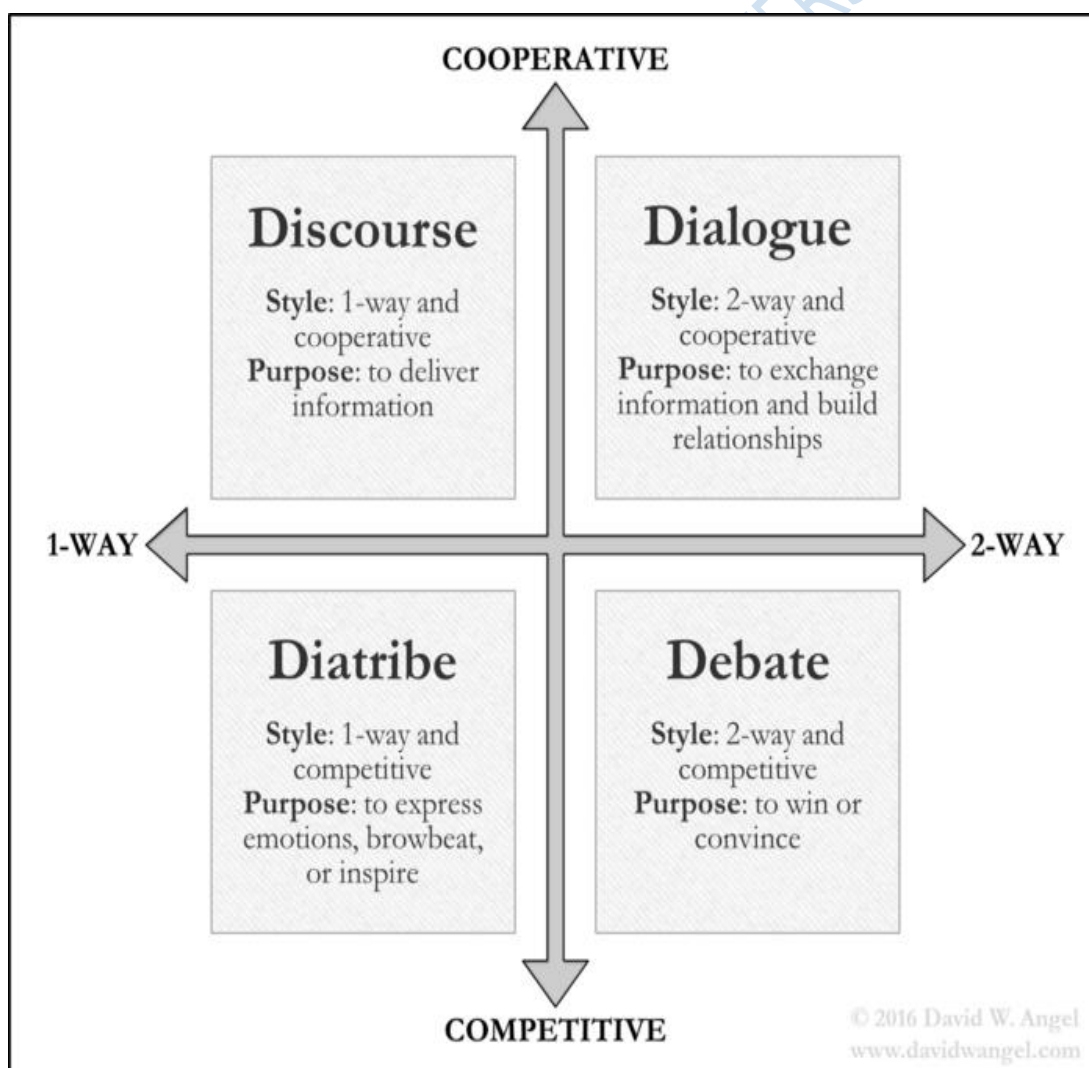


Figure 2.4: The Four Types of Conversations¹²²

As cited by a scholar, it seems there are four notions of dialogue in modern-day literature. These conceptions are:

- ❖ Dialogue as a form of human meeting or relationship
- ❖ Dialogue as the study of the intricacies of human conversation
- ❖ Dialogue as a cultural form of human knowing
- ❖ Dialogue as a means of understanding and interpreting text²⁹.

Having defined and explained what a dialogue is, a researcher identified six major types of dialogue. These major types of dialogue are persuasion, inquiry, information seeking, negotiation, deliberation, and eristic¹²³. The researcher went further to explain each of these types briefly, although the researcher admitted that each of them may overlap. In any of these types, the researcher emphasized the need for commitment in the parties involved in the dialogue¹²³.

Dialogue is essential in resolving conflicts and peacebuilding because it is an inclusive process; it entails learning, not just talking; it recognizes one another's humanity, and it stresses a long-term perspective¹²⁴. Dialogue is regarded by two scholars as "one of the most important tools in conflict resolution..."²⁷. These scholars went further to state some importance of dialogue in resolving conflicts by asserting that,

Dialogue helps people to affirm hope despite conflicts and violence as it helps to create a human community that lives in justice and peace. Through dialogue, warring parties are able to break down the barriers of prejudice, suspicion and misunderstanding. Dialogue enables the parties involved in a conflict to enter into a formal discussion in order to find workable and lasting solutions to a dispute²⁷.

Consequently, there are some rules of engagement in dialogue and mediation. These rules include, but are not limited to, listening, respecting, suspending, voicing, transparency and seating arrangement¹¹¹. Likewise, dialogue can make a difference in facilitating recovery

from crisis; helping avert violent conflict; helping address environmental concerns; and assisting in conflict resolution¹²⁴. Dialogues can become unsustainable “when they become ‘boring’, ‘simplistic’ or ‘threatening’ to a significant number of participants”, and this can make them to “... leave, reduce their level of involvement, or choose not to participate again”¹²⁵. Dialogue can become boring if the dialogue:

- will simply continue to offer 'more of the same';
- is effectively monopolized by a sub-set of participants;
- is simply a series of monologues;
- lacks any transformative dynamic through which it can progressively transcend its present limitations;
- is being manipulated by some participants towards ends which may be unclear;
- tends to get stuck in particular modes;
- is paralyzed by some form of polarizing dynamic;
- is simply being used as a platform to further individual agendas;
- is essentially superficial or naive in its avoidance of more fundamental issues;
- is focused on the formation of a simplistic consensus;
- is unrepresentative of the variety of perspectives on the issues under discussion.
- finger-pointing
- over-simplistic¹²⁵.

This dialogue is to be done mediatively between two or more conflicting parties by conversing separately with each party through constructive discussion and negotiation of the contending issue to make the conflicting parties reach a mutually agreeable resolution. This is called “Levels of Cooperation in Dialogue Processes”, as cited by a scholar in a pictorial explanation in Figure 2.5 ²⁹.

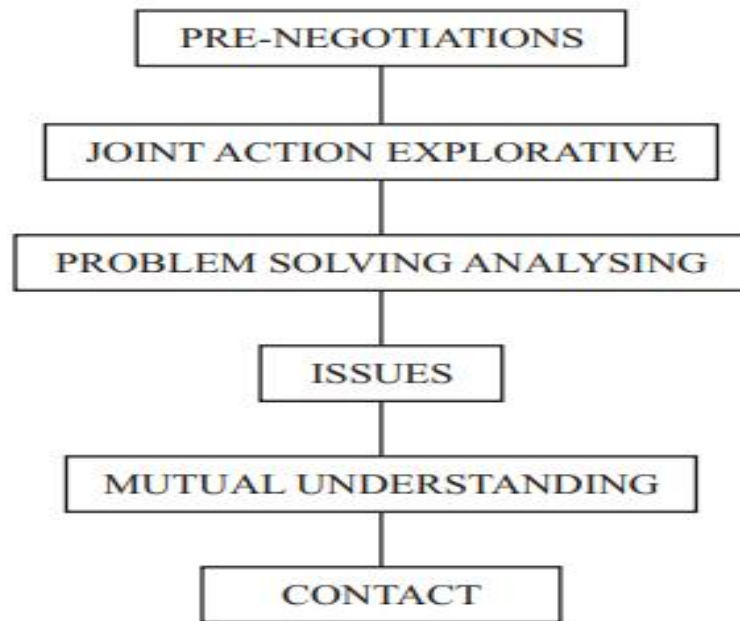


Figure 2.5: Levels of Cooperation in Dialogue Processes²⁹

There is a kind of dialogue known as inter-religious or inter-faith dialogue. This dialogue type has to do with people of different faiths converging to have a reciprocated understanding and respect that allow them to live and assist one another regardless of their differences. This kind of dialogue often comprises advocating understanding among different religions or beliefs to increase respect for others, as against a mixture of new convictions²⁹. The World Council of Churches, other ecumenical bodies, and inter-faith organizations promote and are frequently involved in this.

2.1.2.4. Rules of Mediation (Rules for Mediator)

In the mediation process, there are some regulatory rules for the mediator. Some of them are: listen keenly, be attentive, treat conflicting parties with respect, be neutral, analyze the situation, ask non-threatening questions, be a resource person, and create doubts where need be. On the part of the conflicting parties or mediatees, there should be no disturbance when the other party is telling his/her story, respect for each other, no offensive language,

willingness to come to a settlement that might move the conflict forward, talk with, not against, each other, and sign a “Consent to Mediate Form” if need be¹¹³. Nonetheless, these lists are not complete as other rules can still be explored.

2.1.2.5. Process or Stages of Mediation

There are no two mediations, and no two mediators, that are the same¹²⁶. Nevertheless, there are various stages in the process of mediative dialogue. There are many opinions about these stages, as proposed by many scholars. For this research, some of the stages of mediation are highlighted here. This researcher has tried to rearrange and harmonize these opinions in highlighting the stages here. There is a need for the mediator to firstly meet the parties or participants individually before a joint session. Here, the mediator will understand the parties. This is considered at Stage One of the mediation process. Stage Two involves the “opening statement” during the joint session where the mediator will introduce everyone involved, explain the goals and rules of the mediation, and encourage each side to work cooperatively toward a settlement¹²⁷.

In Stage Three, the mediator will attempt to create trust and confidence with each of the mediatees and in the entire process¹²⁸. In Stage Four, the mediator will encourage active communication and be involved in lively listening as they explore the issue while each mediatee tells his/her story¹²⁹. In Stage Four, each party is allowed to describe in the party’s own words what the disagreement is about and how the party has been affected by it, and to present some general ideas about resolving it. Generally, while one person is speaking, the other cannot interrupt¹²⁷. In Stage Five, the mediator will structure the issues by creating new understanding and motivation for a positive outcome. In Stage Six, the mediatees will be allowed to look for innovative solutions and plan to put the solutions in action. This may be a

private session with each party where each party may be given opportunities “to review and react to the opening session” and share additional information with the mediator¹³⁰.

In Stage Seven, the mediator will close the process and set up a review system by encouraging the parties to use objective criteria to choose from the available options of resolving the conflict, identifying progress and acknowledging the participation of the parties in resolving the conflict, and aiming for a realistic settlement, with which the parties can live with. These may involve 100 per cent solution, compromise, temporary settlement, procedural solutions to substantive problems, deferred decisions, partial settlement, mutual dropping of issues, non-binding decision, issue avoidance, the decision referred to a third party decision maker, stalemate, continued negotiations or shifting to another approach of conflict resolution¹²⁸.

In Stage Eight, which is the last stage, the mediator will help the mediatees to calm the influence of the conflict on themselves and other indirect actors (if existing). The mediator will also assist the mediatees to “retell” the story of their conflict and the steps they have agreed to take to resolve it. As indicated in an online source, “If no agreement over the issues is reached, the mediator will attempt to gain agreement from the parties as to what the issues are and to how they will proceed in the future”¹²⁹. Whichever way the mediation goes, there must be a writing conclusion that each party and the mediator will sign and have copies¹²⁶.

2.1.2.6. Mediation and the Media

The words mediation and media came from the same Latin root word *mediare*¹³¹. A scholar averred, “Mediation, as an act, is imbricated to the media, from the Latin *medium*, *intermediate element*, *mediating instrument*”⁹⁶. Therefore, it can be said that mediation and media are related. It has been observed that “the media has become an increasingly important

actor in socio-environmental conflicts”¹³². In another observation, “While mediation remains a fundamentally human-led endeavour, the importance of digital technology in peace processes is growing”¹³³.

The media can either actively take part in conflicts and thereby has blamed for increasing the violence, or stay independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to resolving the conflicts and decreasing the violence¹³⁴. This implies that media has roles to play in conflict resolution. The roles include educating or informing the contending groups and outsiders who are the listeners, viewers or readers through ideas, information and stories; presenting independent views through editorial or analytical reports; correcting misperceptions about the conflict; encouraging a balance of power, among others¹³⁴. These roles may be regarded as positive roles.

However, media can also have a negative role in escalating conflicts. Some scholars highlighted these negative roles thus: “inciting violence, failing to highlight emerging conflicts, delaying to report conflicts, highlighting hate speech during conflicts, downplaying genocide during conflicts, acting irresponsibly, and deliberately creating misrepresentations in reporting”¹³⁵. Historically, media was not an essential part of the official peacebuilding until the end of the Cold War. Dedicated, non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies made the practice of peacebuilding formal and media technologies developed to allow non-professionals to make and disseminate their own media¹³⁶.

Two scholars have written a paper on why and when to use the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In the paper, they wrote on the media’s orientation toward conflict, functions of the media in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the transformative goals of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and other interplay between media and conflict resolution. In their conclusion, they asserted,

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding professionals can use the media in harmony with their other programs – if they know when, why, and how to use the media for the most

strategic impact in lessening the polarization between groups. On the other hand, media professionals still have much to learn about why and when their work can contribute to preventing violent conflict and building peace between groups. The media and peace professionals both have their limitations and share an interest in the dynamics of conflict¹³⁷.

2.1.2.7. Roles and Responsibilities of a Mediator

Many of these roles and responsibilities of a mediator (or the third party in a mediation process) have been reviewed above under the Process or Stages of Mediation. Another word that can be used for a mediator is “reconciler”¹³⁸. Some scholars simply identified the role of a mediator as sitting with groups of participants that hold differing views and making efforts to narrow down the gaps in the viewpoints of these participants¹³⁹. Another scholar opined that a mediator lacks the power to force or foist decisions, state of affairs, or resolutions on the disputing parties⁴⁶. Rather his aim should be “to transform the dynamics of the conflict situation by introducing new relevant knowledge or information, especially regarding the negotiation process between the disputants, and by revealing common interests and suggesting possible directions toward settlement”⁴⁶.

In highlighting what mediators can do to facilitate rapport building in a mediation process, some scholars gave these suggestions as parts of the roles of a mediator:

1. Relaxing as you interact with the disputants. As you relax others tend toward more relaxed states themselves.
2. Maintaining eye contact. Eye contact conveys attentiveness and is a nonverbal message of "I am listening and interested". Be sensitive to any discomfort parties may have with eye contact.
3. Approximating the other person's posture. Be careful you don't mimic.
4. Matching the tone, tempo and pitch of the other person's voice.
5. Matching predicates. People want to be heard and to feel like they are being understood by others. As individuals we can facilitate understanding by communicating in the language of the other person. Others will typically use visual words (I see, I imagine, I can't focus, etc.), auditory words (I hear, I tuned

out, that rang a bell, etc.) or kinesthetic words (I feel, get in touch, I can't grasp it, etc.). Rapport will be enhanced by using the types of words used most by the person speaking with you.

6. Using appropriate gestures. When paraphrasing, summarizing or providing feedback use the same hand, face and other body gestures used by the other person in his/her communications. Avoid doing so in a fashion that gives the impression you are mimicking.
7. Through the use of paraphrasing you can convey, "I am with you"; "I understand." Effective use of paraphrasing gets you on the same "wave length" as the person who is speaking to you.
8. Dress so you are not completely out of step. Use discretion. Perhaps dress up at first and down later when you know the disputants better¹⁰⁷.

There are many tasks of a mediator. Some of them have been highlighted to include:

1. Help to coordinate the mediation meetings between the conflicting parties.
2. Explain the process of the conflict resolution to the parties.
3. Gather information and identify obstacles.
4. Set the agenda and rules.
5. Create a cease-fire between the parties.
6. Open communication channels.
7. Gain the confidence and trust of the parties.
8. Gather information and identify obstacles.
9. Allow the parties to express feelings and vent emotions.
10. Help the parties to identify and understand their interests and priorities.
11. Help the parties with brainstorming creative options and solutions.
12. Help in defining acceptable objective criteria.
13. Help the parties understand the limitations of their demands through what is known as "a reality test."
14. Help in evaluating alternatives.
15. Allow the process to move forward according to the needs and pace of the parties.
16. Help in crafting the agreement.
17. Help in validating the agreement by the courts (if there is a court that has jurisdiction)¹⁴⁰.

Although the advent of information and communication technologies and the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the world in late 2019 to date are discussed later in this review, it is expedient to review what a researcher termed “New Roles of Mediator” in a recent study¹⁴¹. Specifically, this researcher asserted that the mediator, among other things, has the responsibility to “prevent any cybercrime act which caused intervention between two conflict parties during the mediation process¹⁴¹.”

Although it has been pointed out above that mediation is different from arbitration, a mediator should have some qualities⁹³. These qualities, as a scholar ascribed them against an average arbitrator, are:

- openness and discerning mind,
- ability to drive home decisive points bluntly,
- proof of radiant character disposition; and
- capacity for projecting the interest of their forebears towards implementing customs and norms¹⁴².

It has to be noted here that, as a mediator, all judgments or biases will have to be put aside. No matter the predetermined ideas the mediator might have, such ideas should not manifest in his mediation. Although a researcher doubted this supposition, the researcher still asserted “that the best mediator is completely impartial and unbiased...unconnected...to the parties or their concerns”¹¹⁰. This will make the mediator impartial and help build better trust in him. Thus, in assisting conflicting parties in resolving their conflict, the mediator will be as neutral and open-minded as possible.

A scholar observed that religious actors often serve as mediators in resolving conflicts and that “mediatees” usually prefer these faith-based mediators to secular ones¹⁴³. Two researchers gave a seeming reason for the preference of religious actors because of having some specific qualities that empower them to influence a peace process positively. These researchers state that the religious actors are assumed to have more robust moral and

emotional qualifications and a particular competence that commands respect and confidence of contending groups⁹⁹. Some scholars corroborated this by asserting that in Ibadan in particular (which is the scope of this study), most conflicting issues are brought to religious leaders because of the confidence and respect people have for the religious leaders¹⁴⁴. In the words of two other scholars, “religious leaders and faith-based NGOs have frequently played prominent roles as mediators in conflict management”¹⁸. Some of the “religious mediation strategies” employed by these religious actors in their acts of mediation are “prayers, meditation, religious rituals, religious vocabulary, values and myths... [and even] traditional conflict resolution methods (*suluh*) [among the Muslims]”¹⁴³. These qualities and credentials are really helping religious actors (especially the Baptist pastors in the scope of this study) to resolve the conflicts among their church members better.

2.1.2.8. The Benefits of Mediation

A dispute resolver has highlighted some benefits of mediation¹⁴⁵. Among these benefits are:

1. The parties can settle in whatever way they please. By contrast, in litigation the outcomes are limited to those prescribed by law.
2. The parties determine the outcome. They will not enter into agreement unless they consider it is in their interests to do so. In litigation the arbitrator, court or specialist tribunal determines the outcome. Litigation can lead to win: lose outcomes or even lose: lose outcomes.
3. Mediation is considerably cheaper than litigation.
4. The duration of mediation is considerably shorter than litigation.
5. Mediation can be arranged and held at short notice, whereas litigation usually involves delay.
6. Mediations are private and confidential. Most court and tribunal hearings are open to the public.
7. Parties in mediation usually have a choice as to mediator whereas parties in litigation are usually unable to pick their judges or tribunal members.
8. Mediated settlements avoid the uncertainty of litigated outcomes.

9. Mediation avoids the adversarial unpleasantness of litigation, including cross examination, and the fear and anxiety associated with courthouses and courtrooms.
10. Mediation encourages communication directly between parties, whereas litigation encourages communication between lawyers.
11. Mediation involves the testing of the strengths and weaknesses of the parties' arguments, and hence allows the parties to adjust their positions and settle accordingly. As a general rule, once court or tribunal hearings have commenced the opportunity for settlement is diminished or non-existent, even if a party wishes to adjust their position in the light of the unfolding evidence.
12. Mediation allows the parties to settle on the basis of what is in their best interests. In determining outcomes, courts and tribunals do not regard to the interests of the parties, only to the factual and legal merits of their cases.
13. Mediation allows the parties to settle on the basis of what suits the convenience of themselves and others. Courts and tribunals generally have neither the means nor the inclination to take such matters into account.
14. Mediation allows parties to preserve ongoing relationships. Litigation tends to damage future relationships, sometimes permanently destroying them.
15. Mediation allows alienated parties, for example separated couples, to re-establish communication and trust. Litigation tends to perpetrate or worsen alienation.
16. Mediation can more readily occur without the involvement of lawyers than litigation.
17. Mediation allows the involvement of whatever persons the parties agree, for example family, friends and other support people, whereas in litigation the right to address the court or tribunal is strictly prescribed.
18. Mediation allows the parties to consider whatever evidence they agree, whereas in litigation the evidential rules are strictly prescribed and enforced.
19. Mediation does not give rise to appeals, whereas litigated outcomes are usually subject to the possibility of appeals.
20. If parties do not manage to settle in mediation they do not lose the option of litigation, whereas once litigation is well underway the opportunity for mediation is usually lost.
21. In mediation the mediator is able to engage with the parties in a direct and personal manner. In litigation, the arbitrator, judge or tribunal member is not permitted to do this, and must remain relatively distant and formal¹⁴⁵.

2.1.2.9 Mediation and Conciliation

Against the backdrop that mediation and conciliation are similar, as it has been pointed out above, and, at the same time, different, it is expedient to review these two concepts in tandem with each other. Basically, mediation and conciliation are similar. However, there is a slight or technical difference in them. Many things have been said about mediation. What is conciliation? An online source simply defined conciliation as “an alternative out-of-court dispute resolution instrument”⁵⁵⁰. Nevertheless, broadly, conciliation is described as

...a proceeding in which the parties attempt to reach an agreement in order to resolve a conflict by means of a proceeding guided by one or more impartial third parties (conciliator or a Conciliatory Commission, when several), who do not have any decision-making power over such conflict, but may submit recommendations to the parties in order for them to reach such agreement, and for such agreement to be considered existing, valid, effective and enforceable⁵⁵¹.

This definition points out the similarities and differences in mediation and conciliation. Table 2.2 graphically gives a comparison of the similarities and differences between mediation and conciliation.

Table 2.2: Comparison Chart of the Difference between Mediation and Conciliation⁵⁵²

Basis for Comparison	Mediation	Conciliation
Meaning	Mediation is a process of resolving issues between parties wherein a third party assist them in arriving at an agreement.	Conciliation is a alternatedispute resolution method inwhich an expert is appointedto settle the dispute bypersuading parties to reachagreement.
Regulated by	Code of Civil Procedure,1908	Arbitration and ConciliationAct, 1996
Basic element	Confidentiality, thatdepends on trust.	Confidentiality, whose extentis fixed by law.
Third Party	Acts as facilitator.	Acts as facilitator, evaluatorand intervener.
Result Agreement	Agreement betweenparties It is enforceable by law.	Settlement agreement It is executable as decree ofcivil court.

Based on these clarification and as it will be discussed later, it can be concluded that a pastor is more of a conciliator than a mediator. However, the scope of this study is about how pastors can use social media to mediatively resolve conflicts.

2.1.3. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

2.1.3.1. History of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (also known as “Global Goals”) are the proposal to achieve a better and more sustainable or environmental future for everyone by 2030 ¹⁴⁶. These Sustainable Development Goals refer to “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”¹⁴⁷. In the words of some scholars, these goals “stem from the undeniable need to eradicate poverty, combat inequalities, tackle climate change, and improve the well-being of human beings”¹⁴⁸.

The idea of sustainable development has been evolving for almost 50 years. Precisely, in 1972, United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, was attended by 113 states and representatives from 19 international organizations). The conference emphasized protecting the human environment as a crucial element in the development agenda. This led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme Secretariat and many environmental institutions by many nations¹⁴⁹.

The World Commission on Environment and Development issued a report entitled *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundtland Report) in 1987 ¹⁵⁰. This report “suggests that creating separately existing environmental institutions is not enough because environmental issues are an integral part of all development policies”¹⁴⁹. The Earth Summit (or the 1992 UN Conference of Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro) was

another landmark in the sustainable development evolution where “Agenda 21” was endorsed¹⁵¹. World leaders, at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, committed themselves to implementing this agenda. It has to be noted that since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, they have played a role in taking more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, decreasing the number of people that suffered chronic hunger, avoidable death and illness, and giving more girls and boys the opportunity to attend school than it used to be before¹⁵².

There was another conference of the United Nations on sustainable development held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective of this conference was “to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world”¹⁵³. In this conference, member states adopted a document – “The Future We Want”¹⁵⁴. There they decided, among other things, to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to establish the “UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development”¹⁵⁵. The forum was a build-up to the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁵⁶ The conference thereby adopted a document tagged “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” on September 28, 2015, by 193 gathered member states of the United Nations in its headquarters in New York¹⁵⁷.

This document contains 17 goals intended to be reached by all states and stakeholders by the year 2030 ¹⁵². The objective of these goals “is to build on the MDGs and complete their promising but narrow and sectoral achievements, in a more integrated, inclusive, and balanced manner”¹⁵⁸. By adopting these goals, “world leaders resolved to free humanity from poverty, secure a healthy planet for future generations, and build peaceful, inclusive societies as a foundation for ensuring lives of dignity for all”¹⁵⁹. By these goals described as “kind of

panacea”, “our destination is in our sights: an end to extreme poverty by 2030; a life of peace and dignity for all”¹⁶⁰. These goals “aim at tackling multiple and complex challenges faced by humankind”¹⁶¹. Two scholars were more explicit in giving the aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

aim at completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and also include targets on areas that have deteriorated or become more challenging since the turn of the century, including growing income disparities within countries, insecure and low-paid employment, climate change and environmental degradation¹⁶².

2.1.3.2. The Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted are seventeen, though they are further disintegrated into 169 targets. There are currently about 230 indicators that have been proposed for achieving these targets¹⁶³. These goals are:

Goal 1: No poverty (End poverty in all its forms everywhere)

Goal 2: Zero Hunger (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture)

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being (Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages)

Goal 4: Quality education (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all)

Goal 5: Gender Equality (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all)

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all)

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all)

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation)

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities (Reduce inequality within and among countries)

- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable)
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption, Production (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns)
- Goal 13: Climate Action (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy)
- Goal 14: Life Below Water (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development)
- Goal 15: Life on Land (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss)
- Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels)
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) ¹⁴⁷.

Figure 2.6 gives a pictorial representation of each of these goals.



Figure 2.6: Pictorial Representation of Each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Since this study has to do with the pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, it is expedient to relate each of these goals to the activities of the Convention. Two scholars explained this in a study¹⁵⁰. Their explanation is presented in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3: Nigerian Baptist Convention's Contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ^{150, 165}

Goals	The target to achieve	Contributions	Remarks
Goal 1 No poverty	To end poverty in all forms everywhere.	• Women missionary Union • Social ministries • Youth and student ministries • Bowen University's Investments in Human Resources	Empowering women: creating employment opportunities; youth empowerment
Goal 2 Zero Hunger	To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and to promote sustainable agriculture.	• Bowen University • Global Mission Board	Farms at Bowen University in Iwo, Ijaye Orile, Ogun State and at Oyedeji, Moniya, Oyo State.
Goal 3 Good Health	To ensure good health and wellbeing for all at all ages	• Bowen Teaching Hospital and Baptist Hospitals.	Provision of professional health services to people irrespective of their religion, tribe or color.
Goal 4 Quality Education	To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.	• Bowen University, Theological Institution • Baptist academics, various church educational institutions and literacy units.	Provision of affordable education through NBC Schools.
Goal 5 Gender Equality	To achieve gender equality and empower women and girls through	• Women Missionary Union • Social Ministries.	Empowering women and widows for business. Educating women to

	education, health, decent work and so on.		own businesses. Admitting women as pastors.
Goal 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	• Bowen University • Women Missionary Union	Provision of clean water through water industries at Ibadan, Oyo, and Iwo. Provision of borehole by local churches to host communities
Goal 7 Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.	Bowen University, Iwo.	Provision of solar energy for homes and offices in some locations in Nigeria
Goal 8 Decent work and economic growth.	To promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth; full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Baptist schools, Bowen University, Local churches, NBC investments, Social ministries, Baptist Hospital and Bowen Microfinance	Employment of people into various departments and agencies; hospitals and investment agencies; microfinance loans to SMEs
Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.	To build infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	Baptist Press, Bowen Microfinance, Baptist Television, Bowen Radio, local churches and Baptist Guest Houses.	Provision of social amenities. Building of structures, repairs of roads by the local churches within their communities.
Goal 10 Reducing inequalities	Reduce income inequality within and among countries.	Social Ministries, Women Missionary Union and Youth and Student Ministries.	Empowering widows with capital to begin business; employment of women into various NBC departments and agencies (like prisons, aged and disable ministries)
Goal 12 Responsible consumption and production.	To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	Christian Education Department	Educating people to prepare for the rainy days to avoid living in abject poverty in future.
Goal 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	NBC Legal Department Pastors of the local churches	Helping people to fight injustice, preaching against exploitation and all forms of vices in the society. Promotion of peaceful co-existence with Non-Baptists.

The focus of this research is based on Goal Number Sixteen (16) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This goal, as highlighted above, aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

2.1.3.3. Peace, Mediation and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

Although, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development is placed as number sixteen in the Sustainable Development Goals and under the social pillar of the Goals, it is not less important because the agenda of the goals look for fortifying worldwide peace in greater liberty^{166, 167, 168}. Two scholars remarked that “more than one [goal of the Sustainable Development Goals] touch upon peace in one way or another”⁹³. Significantly, the Sustainable Development Goals aims at reducing “all forms of violence and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity”¹⁶⁹. With this aim in mind, it is the opinion of two researchers that this goal – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development – is the most important of, and central to, all the goals in the Sustainable Development Goals because none of the other goals can be achieved without this particular goal¹⁶⁹. Another researcher considered this goal that has to do with peaceful and inclusive societies as the first to attain the other goals¹⁷⁰.

Accomplishing the goal of peaceful, just and inclusive societies is still improbable¹⁶⁶. This is against the backdrop that we live in a world that is increasingly divided and full of wars and terrorism where many threats to national and international peace and stability by non-state actors are emerging as a major influence for both developed and developing countries¹⁷¹. People are at the centre of the Sustainable Development Goals. Everything to be achieved is centred on people. Unfortunately, many internally displaced people and refugees

are as a result of these wars and acts of terrorism, and this does not augur well for development. Therefore, maintaining peace becomes a vital thing to achieve¹⁷². The focus on peace is paramount because poverty cannot be eradicated, and development gained cannot be sustained under violent, conflict-prone and insecure environment¹⁷³. This position was affirmed by some world leaders during one of the United Nations General Assembly sessions some years ago¹⁷³. Therefore, efforts should be made to minimize or prevent violence, conflicts and insecurity in the society. In other words, peace should be encouraged by all means. The reason is that every organisation needs a certain amount of peace and order to remain a unified social unit and for the accomplishment of her cultural, socio-economic and political objectives¹⁷⁴.

Nevertheless, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development is not just about ending these wars, violence and terrorism. The goal also focuses on having access to “justice, corruption and bribery, transparency, fundamental freedoms, and participatory decision-making”¹⁶⁹. More elaboration has been given by highlighting some key targets for peace: reducing violence and making the public secure; voice and participation in decision-making; ending impunity and ensuring access to justice; transparency, and accountability and controls on corruption¹⁷³. Other key targets for peace are addressing the external stresses that lead to conflict; fair access to social services and resources; shared economic growth and opportunities for decent livelihoods; the ability of states to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably; and ensuring equality between social groups – especially between men and women¹⁷³. Interestingly, some of these targets are related to some other goals in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Peace has been identified as an essential condition for the sustainable development of any nation³². Peaceful co-existence is paramount to a healthy and developing society and “the most treasured and the greatest asset of a man”^{175, 89}. What then is peace, and how can it be

attained and sustained? Against the backdrop that “peace has a multidimensional nature”¹⁷⁶, the concept of peace is construed differently across cultures and social values with changeable levels of importance given to individual and communal well-being¹⁷⁷. This concept of peace has been in existence from time immemorial. However, it became a real focus after World War II¹⁷⁸. Etymologically, the Latin word for peace, “*pax*”, means “freedom from civil disorder”. In contrast, the Hebrew word for peace, “*shalom*”, designates “not only the reduction of conflict but rightness, completeness and wholeness”¹⁷⁹.

Peace has generally been defined as “freedom from disturbance, tranquility, absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering, violence, and about peaceful co-existence” or “justice, development, respect, tolerance and love among people”^{3, 180}. It has been described as a manifestation of harmony with the absence of violence, conflict behaviours and freedom from fear or violence. It also means a state of quiet or serenity; freedom from uproar or protest; general order or tranquillity; freedom from violence or uprising; a state of reconciliation after conflict or hostility¹⁸¹. A philosopher argued that peace does not mean the absence of conflict, but the absence of *violent* conflict¹⁸². A scholar corroborated this by asserting that peace is “the absence of physical, psychological and structural violence with justice presence”¹⁸³.

There is another argument that peace is more than the absence of physical violence. The proponents of this argument believe that “a deeper or 'positive' peace includes changes in the attitudes of conflicting parties and the transformation of the systemic and structural elements that form part of the reasons for why the tensions that are present in every society spill over and become violent”¹⁷³. It is the argument of other two scholars that “peace as an opposite of war is easily recognized; however, it is peace as the prevalence of justice that is harder to achieve”⁹³. Two scholars viewed peace sociologically as “a condition of social

harmony in which there are no social antagonisms, there is no social conflict and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs and expectations”¹⁸⁴. In the words of a researcher,

Peace is a universal and wide-ranging value. It has no religion. It takes place in humanity, fraternity and harmony. Peace is of two types that are internal peace and external peace. Internal peace involves the peace of mind, thinking, knowledge, and understanding and believes etc. External peace is in relationships with the humanity and adjustment in the society¹⁸⁵.

Positive and negative peace have been identified and differentiated against the backdrop that “we often recognize [peace] by its absence”¹⁸⁶. Negative peace is the absence of violence, pessimistic, curative, and peace not always by peaceful means. In contrast, positive peace is structural integration, optimistic, preventive, and peace by peaceful means¹¹. In a report, positive peace has been elucidated as “the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies”¹⁸⁷. The report gave a pictorial illustration of the interconnected factors included in Positive Peace, as shown in Figure 2.7 ¹⁸⁷.

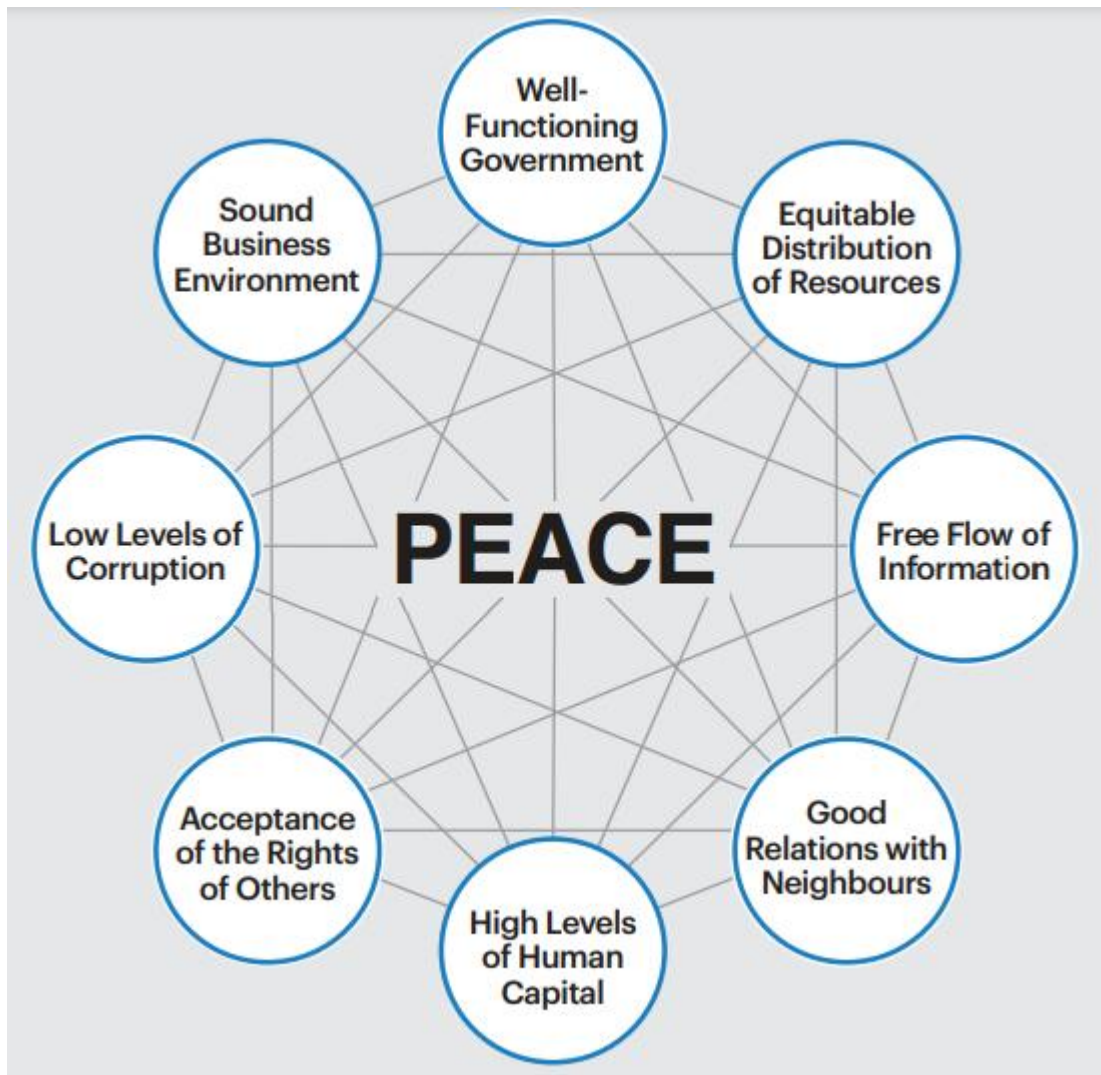


Figure 2.7: The Pillars of Positive Peace¹⁸⁷

Two scholars opined that “the word ‘PEACE’ has a clear meaning for most people, [but] ‘peaceful act’ and ‘peaceful individual’ can have different interpretations”¹⁸⁸. They went further,

...the peaceful act is an act that brings humans closer to peace. And the peaceful individual is a person who is at peace. Such an individual has overcome his internal conflicts and has freed himself from other conflicts.... However, a peaceful person, who is at peace, does not have such inner brakes to stop his transcendent movement, and his mental energy is not concentrated on dealing with such conflicts¹⁸⁸.

Identifying a “peaceful society” has become another debate among scholars. Two scholars suggested that “peaceful societies can be defined in terms of traits and functions: economic affluence, effectiveness of the state apparatus, mechanisms for resolving internal conflicts and so forth”⁹³. A theologian added a need for “mutual harmony among the citizenry that will engender peaceful coexistence and sustainable development”¹⁸⁹.

In supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 16 that has to do with promotion of peaceful and inclusive society and justice and strong institutions, mediation has been identified as a veritable means and mediators “as credible intermediaries and confidence builders to improve relationships, reduce mistrust in institutions, and facilitate collaboration and coordination among polarized groups and sectors”¹⁹⁰. This is also corroborated in a report of the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the UN Secretary General¹⁹¹. Many countries like Israel, Latvia, Burundi, Poland, to mention but few have started using mediation to implement the goal^{192, 193, 194, 195}. There is even the ‘cultural mediation’ approach that a researcher has developed to foster “an engagement of artists and cultural professionals in encouraging access and active participation in cultural life for all citizens” as a means to actualize Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁹⁷.

The importance of peace to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals was brought to the fore by the global outbreak of the Corona Virus, popularly known as COVID-19¹⁷⁶. The COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant effects on the world have affected the actualization of the Goals negatively. Therefore, building “peaceful, just and inclusive societies” has become more critical than before¹⁹⁷. Some scholars recently studied the effects of COVID-19 on “Conflict, extremism, resilience and peace in South Asia” and concluded that “more than ever, we need to join hands to support our shared humanity and shape a new future for generations to come”¹⁹⁸. Another recent study discovered that “the challenges and

opportunities for peacebuilding arising during the pandemic will inform how peacebuilding will function in the future”¹⁹⁹. In Nigeria, a study during the pandemic lockdown between March and July 2020 explored the influence of public health crises, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, on peace, using Nigeria as a case study¹⁷⁶. From the discovery of the study, it was concluded that while the effect of the pandemic in Nigeria was mostly damaging, the outbreak is bringing “religiously different people together in a conflict-affected setting that is characterized by religious divisions, and it has offered ideas about interreligious peace that could be utilized by peacebuilders in Nigeria and other religiously diverse societies”¹⁷⁶.

2.1.4. Conflict Resolution and Social Media Usage

2.1.4.1. Effective Communication

Etymologically, the word “communication” has its roots in the Latin word, “*communicare*”, which means “to make common” – that is, to create a common understanding, a common perception²⁰⁰. Essentially,

...communication is understood as the process of delivering information or messages by a communicator to the communicant through certain means with certain goals and impacts [or] the process of delivering messages from the communicator to the communicant and getting feedback or responses from the communicant²⁰⁰.

Communication is profoundly entrenched in human activities and cultures. It is hard to imagine social or behavioural happenings lacking communication. The reason is that communication has to do with learning, relating, helping, influencing and playing with other people²⁰¹. Some scholars had described communication as “a process comprising of elements, the sender, encoding the message, transmitting the message through a medium, receiving the message, decoding the message, feedback, and noise”²⁰². These scholars argued that communication has not taken place except “the receiver obtains the message and provide (an) indication that the message has been received and understood as intended by the sender”²⁰².

Undeniably, communication relates to communal behaviours and dealings of any group of things, regardless of whether they are human or not²⁰³. In the olden days, numerous signals, signs, voices, and sounds within a household, community, town, and state represented communication²⁰⁴. Nevertheless, the art of communication over time has advanced through the help of technology, from the simplest methods of disseminating information to the progressive 21st-century technologies²⁰⁵.

Some researchers have distinguished between “intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication”²⁰¹. Intrapersonal communication is the communication one has with oneself. In contrast, interpersonal communication occurs when one interrelates with a person with whom one has some kind of relationship. This relationship can be face-to-face or through electronic channels²⁰¹. However, as observed by some scholars, effective interpersonal communication skills are not natural, although interpersonal communication forms nearly every facet of human social life²⁰⁶. There are other types of communication like a small group, public (or open) communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication, and mass communication²⁰⁰.

Although some scholars have argued that creating improved communications and building relationships between mediatees do not automatically bring about an agreement to end the conflict, effective communication is crucial in mediative dialogue^{3, 207}. It is the opinion of a scholar that “having a communication plan is essential to the success of any crisis management process regardless of the type of the crisis”²⁰⁸. Another scholar thought that “communication in conflict resolution is favourable when it creates shared meaning and includes interactions”²⁰⁹.

Effective communication in resolving conflict involves many things. These things include the arts of listening (through proper body language, asking relevant questions, not interjecting, and being able to show understanding) and asking questions that are ordinarily

flexible and hinged on the context and position of the person asking²¹⁰. Other things that it involves are rephrasing (that is, saying back what the speaker has said by changing the words, but not the meaning) and summarising the process (at major transitions and at the end of the whole process)²¹⁰.

2.1.4.2. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Technological tools or Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) simply mean “all technical means used to handle information and facilitate communication... [that include] both computer and network hardware, as well as software”²¹¹. The term “information and communication technology” (or ICT) came into being as result of the desire of a group of universities and entrepreneurs “to help design a network that would help people access information and communicate with others”²¹². Technological tools are any tool or interconnected system of tools used in the automatic procurement, storage, manipulation management, control, exhibition, and exchanging and diffusion of information²¹³. These technological tools are telephones, digital cameras, microphones, amplifiers, loudspeakers, projectors, screens, television sets, tape recorders, video or video compact disc (VCD) recorder, and computers²¹⁴. Others are BlackBerry, iPad, iPod, iPhone, and tablets. Many more tools are emerging almost every day. These tools have saturated every facet of human existence because they have become essential for daily living²¹⁴. Although Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are often considered to be an extended synonym for information technology (IT), two researchers argued that the scope of ICTs is broader as ICTs have been described as “the emergence of several technologies and the use of common transmission lines carrying very diverse data and communication types and formats.”²¹⁵

The world is changing speedily with the advancement of technology as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are having an intense influence on the way people

live²¹³. Two researchers observed that ICT “is beginning to mediate our social relationships or self-identities and our wider sense of social life to an extent we are only beginning to grasp”²¹⁶. In a recent report, 92.6 per cent of the world's population are using mobile phone technology. In comparison, 59.5 per cent are active users of the Internet as of January 2021²¹⁷. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has dramatically influenced “daily activities like work, education, health care, leisure activities, entertainment, travelling, personal relationships, and the other life activities”²¹⁸. Some researchers asserted, “The global revolution in information technology gives rise to what is today known as the digital environment – an environment characterized by integrated communication systems where digital devices are used to communicate and manage the content and activities within it”²¹⁹. The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has not only made the “global village philosophy [just] a mere expression but a startling reality”²²⁰. However, as noted by two scholars, each time new technology surfaces, as there are people who embrace it and integrate it into their everyday living, other people outrightly refrain from using it, regardless of how helpful, fanciful, attractive, and acceptable the technology is²²¹. The scholars further noted that the approval or otherwise or both have become means of understanding the relationship between technology and man²²¹.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be categorized into many aspects. Table 2.4 below gives some categories and their example.

Table 2.4: Categories and Examples of Digital Technologies²²²

Categories	Examples
<i>Information Search Technology</i>	Search Engines such as Google
<i>Mobile Phone Technology</i>	Calling, texting, camera, video
<i>Video Technology</i>	YouTube, TikTok, Twitch
<i>Data Collection, Management, and Visualization Technology</i>	OpenXData, KoBoToolbox, etc

<i>Internet Communication</i>	Email, Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp, Messenger, etc
<i>Data Analytics</i>	Crowdtangle, Hootsuite, Storyful, etc
<i>Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence</i>	Algorithms, bots, and other programmed technology that makes decisions, learns, or acts on its own accord
<i>Virtual Reality</i>	Oculus Rift, Google Cardboard, etc
<i>Geospatial technology</i>	Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), Drones, etc
<i>Social Media</i>	Twitter, Weibo, Facebook, Instagram
<i>Blockchain</i>	Cryptocurrencies and other record-keeping technologies

The influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has led to the use of technology as the best way to discover many things²²³. These technological tools are becoming “key modifier of human behavior” and increasingly prominent in the daily lives of people^{224, 225}. So, the upsurge of Information and Communication Technologies has transformed the information space around conflict by providing a growing number of people with the tools to record and share their experiences with the rest of the world²²⁶. Technological tools have changed the nature of communication and improved the ways communication is being handled^{227, 228}. The advancement of these technological tools has increased the number of actors in conflicts and peacebuilding in recent times²²⁹. In the words of two scholars, “Advances in technology are... known to have generated man-made problems of biological weapons and warfares, among others”²³⁰. A scholar concluded that “with the proliferation of online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and mobile instant messaging such as WhatsApp and Telegram, digital media plays a key role in the way in which people communicate and maintain interpersonal relationships”²⁰⁶. These social networks have altered the mode of communication among people, the relations they have and the possibility to create and disseminate information with other people throughout the world, becoming a regular happening. These social networks encourage interpersonal relationships grounded on the strengthening of personal profiles where reachable information is circulated by all on the social network²³¹.

The advent of the Internet generally and social media specifically “has solved the geographic problem of distance that usually impact on communication”²³². In addition, the Internet and social media are now “used as a powerful, if unorthodox, device to directly intervene in talks from afar—though without a clear-eyed understanding of its impact”²³³. It has removed the “time and space barriers that impeded people’s interconnectivity, and rather provided them with greater prospects for the maintenance of existing social ties and expansion of social networks”²³⁴. Some scholars have perceived the Internet to fundamentally “improve the effectiveness of communication, at the same time reducing the costs of communication”²³⁵. However, since people, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are now using technological tools in various ways, some risks associated with modern technologies have been a major challenge²³⁶.

As observed by some scholars, “the importance of computers and technology as a mediator between two communicating parties is no longer as much of a novelty as it was just two decades ago”²³⁷. Information and Communication Technologies are offering unique and innovative opportunities, not only for conflict prevention but also for managing conflict and building peace by allowing real-time information to inform preventive action in potential conflict²³⁸. In fact, Information and Communication Technologies have been seen as “a driver and enabler of sustainable peace and it allows diverse routes to address complex conflict scenarios”²³⁹. Some scholars had carried a research on the roles of information and communication technology (ICT) generally and social media, particularly in some major conflicts all over the world²⁴⁰. In the study, they were able to gain awareness of the contemporary condition in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) in conflict situations; describe how various actors in conflict areas make use of social media and ICT for their what they wanted to achieve; and gain the ability to assess the significance of a

critical perception on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in conflict situations²⁴⁰.

Moreover, “as enablers and connectors, technologies can be used as important transformative tools for enhancing sustainable human development and preventing violent conflict”²⁴¹. With the outbreak of COVID-19 in the late 2019 and its resultant lockdown of many places globally, “the digitalization of peacebuilding has received increased attention”²⁴². There have been two categories in applying digital technology in peacebuilding: “the non-strategic use of digital tools that innovates operational processes; and the strategic use of digital technology that pursues a specific peacebuilding goal...”²⁴². The second category has been termed “digital peacebuilding”²⁴².

In the words of two scholars,

The dominance of information and communication technology in Africa has both advantages and disadvantages, since on the one hand it could promote development in the economic, political and social spheres... while on the other hand it has the potential to pave the way for the rapid growth of terrorists’ use of social media²⁴³.

However, despite the rising prominence of social media in spreading misinformation, hate and inciting violence, technological tools have been identified as helping tools in conflict resolution and peacebuilding²⁴⁴. These are in the following ways:

- Identifying and mapping hate speech and rumours;
- Countering hate speech and rumours;
- Identifying and mapping risks to livelihood or other likely causes of conflict;
- Collating and analysing citizens’ perceptions of risk and conflict;
- Mapping violent incidents;
- Tracking armed groups;
- Providing early warning;
- Identifying examples of peaceful behaviour²⁴⁵.

A simple arrangement of functions that new technologies can have in peacebuilding has been suggested thus:

1. Data processing: improving data collection, organization, and analysis processes
2. Communications: providing new avenues for sharing information and stories
3. Gaming: introducing elements of gaming that can provide alternative incentives for action
4. Engagement: creating new ways for people to influence or take action in their communities²⁴¹.

A scholar has provided a framework for understanding the influence of social media on conflict through four interconnected themes. These themes are:

- a) social media decreases the costs of communication;
- b) social media makes the speed and spreading of information to increase;
- c) the need for researchers to focus on the premeditated interaction and competitive adaptation of actors in reaction to the changes of information and communication technology; and
- 5) the new information that social media offers are not only an significant resource, but also basically change the data available to conflict actors, thereby influencing the conflict itself²⁴⁶.

While it is contemplated that the potential of new technologies in acting as conflict prevention tools is significant, it is important to note that any application will complement, not replace, existing conflict prevention frameworks²³⁸.

Two issues around the use of ICT that are of particular concern to the practice of mediation have been identified: one. In contrast, mediation has traditionally been a communication process largely based on face-to-face interaction and in-person trust-building, new technologies can conceal some information and reasoning gaps. Still, they can also introduce new reasoning biases and what can be 'noise' that can possibly challenge postulations and methods used in mediation processes. Two, the explosion of new sources of information in an increasingly interconnected world changes the analytical setting whereby mediators use their own analysis to offer conflict parties a structure within which they can 'agree to disagree' about what is true, and where shared narratives can be developed that will

reasonably resonate with the wider public²¹¹. Some scholars identify that technological tools can be a tool both for the transformation and escalation of conflict and seek to investigate their multi-level and multi-dimensional potential²⁴⁷.

One of the significant hurdles to using technological tools in preventing conflict is that these tools may not be appropriate or effective in every conflict or context²⁴⁸. The use of digital sources for analysis has its benefits as well as risks. Some researchers have highlighted these benefits and risks as presented in Table 2.5²¹¹:

Table 2.5: Benefits and Risks of Technological Tools²¹¹

Benefits	Risks
• Social media analysis and big data analytics can enable realtime context analysis and assist in preparedness. • Social media analysis and big data analytics may enable mediation teams to identify growing areas of conflict at faster rates than previously possible. • Social media analysis may help mediation teams identify networks, key influencers, and important locations, enabling them to target and focus their work. • Social media may enable broader inclusion of opinions and populations in mediation processes. • Social media analysis and big data analytics can help mediation teams monitor ongoing agreements.	• Use of social media analytics and big data analytics for crisis mapping may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in access to technology and may not be fully representative. • Social media can only provide a partial picture of public opinion, which may be more extreme than actual opinion. • Social media may be manipulated by parties to influence the mediation process and analytics may not identify this. • Bias in algorithms, search terms, and software may go unseen, offering a false sense of certainty. • Predictive capacity is limited and depends on interpretation.

It is noteworthy that the global rapid technological growth and the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to build peace have made some people

come up with the term “peacetech” or “peace tech”²⁴⁹. There is even a movement for “peacetech”²⁵⁰. Peacetech is simply defined as any particular “technology that contributes to peacebuilding”²²². The three primary functions of peacetech are data management, strategic communication, and dialogue and networking²⁵¹. While this movement is continually growing, the current tools and trends in peace tech include:

- Information and Communication Technologies - ICTs can be mobile phones used for surveys, crowdsourcing platforms used to gather real-time data from witnesses, or social media tools used to announce, organize, and report on protests, elections, and movements.
- New Media - digital, text, photo, and video content that individuals generate through social media applications and platforms, and submit through the Internet or mobile devices. New media is used to monitor developments as they unfold, hear a range of voices, and share attitudes and mobilize people to act on important issues and events.
- Big Data – data available online used to create early warning and early-response systems, conflict and crisis mapping networks, and real-time feedback for monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- Crowd Sourcing – outsourcing of specific tasks to an undefined public - used to monitor elections, protests, movements, conflicts, natural disasters, and peace processes, turning everyday civilians into voluntary information gatherers and providing organizations with eyes and ears in the field.
- Online Mapping - Online mapping allows one to collect and analyse data linked to a specific geographic area and track movement. Online maps are used by peacebuilding professionals to track the spread of conflict, monitor elections, and coordinate responses to natural disasters across different locations over time²⁵².

Various scholars have already come up with some taxonomy in relation to peacebuilding. This classification has been sorted into twenty-five spheres and briefly explained by a scholar thus:

1. Digital Citizen Journalism and Cyber Witnessing
2. Digital Conflict Analysis and Ceasefire Monitoring
3. Digital Election Monitoring
4. Digital Early Warning of Violence and Dangerous Speech

5. Digital Civilian Protection
6. Digital Public Opinion Polling
7. Digital Coordinating and Managing Crisis Information
8. Digital Governance
9. Digital Monitoring and Evaluation
10. Digital Responses to Violent Extremism and Terror
11. Digital Fact-Checking to Stop Rumours
12. Digital Social Marketing of Peace Narratives
13. Modeling Digital Communication Skills
14. Facilitating Intergroup Digital Dialogue
15. Digital Peace Education through Gaming
16. Digital Violence Prevention
17. Digital Diplomacy, Negotiation and Mediation
18. Digital Inclusion in Peace Processes
19. Digital Upstanding
20. Digital Social Movements
21. Digital Hackathons and PeaceTech Startups
22. Peace Engineering
23. The Hague Peace Data Standard
24. Digital Media Literacy
25. Digital Public Safety²²².

2.1.4.3. The Internet

The Internet is simply the world network of networks or the interconnectivity of networks of computers and other technological tools²⁵³. It is also described as “the global systems of networked computers, servers and routers”²⁵⁴. An official definition of the Internet was adopted on October 24, 1995, by the U.S. Federal Networking Council (FNC) as cited by an expert thus:

...that the following language reflects our definition of the term ‘Internet’. ‘Internet’ refers to the global information system that –

- (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons;

- (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and
- (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein²⁵⁵.

The Internet “originated in December 1969 as a primitive link-up of 4 computers located at the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara campuses of the University of California, the Stanford Research Institute, and the University of Utah”²⁵⁶. This is to “build robust, fault-tolerant communication with computer networks”²⁵³. As stated by a scholar, “The Internet carries a vast range of information resources and services, such as the interlinked hypertext documents and applications of the World Wide Web (WWW), electronic mail, telephony, and file sharing”²⁵³.

A growing part of the world's population has access to the Internet. It has transformed the world of computers and communications tremendously^{166, 257}. The Internet “has had a great impact on human life” as it “has permeated every sphere of human endeavour, ranging from communication, science and technology, telecommunication, education, health, among others”^{200, 221}. The Internet will continue to evolve and transform the world of computer and communications and the world generally²⁵⁷. This has enabled individuals and businesses to share information, resources, and services.

It has been noted that “the Internet has given everyone a voice”, and the opportunity of reaching larger numbers of people through the Internet has allowed its users to build connections that would have been difficult to sustain²⁵⁸. These ties have created many 'networks' among people²⁶⁹. The Internet has lessened the “monopoly of information” as people now have access to information more than the older generation²²¹. In support of this, a scholar underscored some personal benefits of using the Internet:

- 1) Communications– the Internet provides pleasant way of communications, providing opportunities for people to communicate effectively and in more

relaxed conditions. This they can do through emails, greetings, chats, blogs, Internet messages, distant calls, etc.

- 2) Getting news and information– Information is key to human existence. Much of activities on the Internet revolve around information such as weather forecasts and announcements.
- 3) Entertainment– the Internet is a house of entertainment offering people recreation and fun.
- 4) Online commerce and economic building– Many business transactions are now on the Internet. You can do interbank transfers, buy data, pay for cable TV and make purchases on the Internet.
- 5) Online job hunting– Job seekers also look out for opportunities on the Internet. Besides many governmental and nongovernmental organisations recruit through the Internet.
- 6) Ego– the Internet has a capacity to confer status on users. This is because the Internet is a sophisticated medium with some trappings of eclecticism among users. Students who have regular access to the Internet can really pride on it.
- 7) Cultural Transmission– the Internet gives us ample room to share our culture.
- 8) Escape– The world is enmeshed in different types of problems. An Internet user can immerse in the world of Internet and this keeps one busy.
- 9) Online matching– The pursuit of friendship on the Internet. Strange fellows to become dear on the net and attempt dating and even begin dating.
- 10) Affection and bonding– People share feelings by the use of social media. By this people endear themselves to others and family members cash to foster bonding.
- 11) Warning– On a daily basis people share experiences, warning virtual colleagues of dangers of a particular situation or action.
- 12) Data bank– The Internet is a store house of knowledge; it also grants users opportunity to store personal experiences and valuable information. All uploads on Facebook and other social media are permanent allowing users to revisit information from time to time.
- 13) Information and Knowledge– Information is power and there is no joke about it. I think active internet users have predisposition to be part of information haves other than have nots.
- 14) Education– Formal education is obtainable on the Internet and many have obtained formal certificates through this medium. This is exploited by adult learners (those above 24) and below.
- 15) Health– Many sites offer information and guide on several health matters such as diabetes and hypertension. Even though they do not replace formal meeting

with a doctor, these sites have some capacities. Some require a sign in, others are outright free²⁶⁰.

The Internet is now midwifing a paradigm shift from citizenship to “netizenship”²⁶¹. However, this paradigm shift that has made “a large part of this generation’s social, emotional and spiritual development takes place on the internet and while interacting on social media” has made many things that were used to be restricted now go on without any restriction²⁶². The advent of the Internet has caused an acceleration of “digital convergence with a range of players: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, books. This convergence has led to the evolution of *mixed media*”²⁶⁰.

Two types of Internet users and social media have been identified: digital natives and digital immigrants²⁶³. The digital natives are people who were born after 1980. These came to the world when the digital media existed. Nevertheless, the digital immigrants are people who were born before 1980 and adjusted their lives to digital media²⁶³.

A scholar opined that the Internet usage in Nigeria has now cut across demographics. It is becoming more obvious that most age groups from people born between 1946 and 1964 (known as the baby boomers) to those born between 1982 and 2004 (known as the millennial) are learning more on how to access the Internet by using handheld devices and computers²⁶⁴. The scholar further explained how Nigerians, even in rural areas, are now utilizing the Internet, especially social media on smartphones, in their daily activities like connecting with other people, online shopping, online banking, searching for information, information dissemination, and the likes²⁶⁴.

On a somewhat negative note, the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that gave birth to the Internet and social media has brought annual global job losses to many people as technology is replacing the place of human beings in many aspects of the society. However, this is creating new opportunities for other people globally²⁶⁵.

It is the belief of this researcher that every individual will have to determine to be affected by the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) either negatively or positively because the advent has opened many opportunities to explore for everyone.

A study has shown that the world remains digitally divided despite the rising use of the Internet and smartphone ownership as people in more affluent countries have higher proportions of the use of the Internet and ownership of smartphones compared to the people in developing countries. In these latter countries, people who use the Internet frequently turn out to be more likely than people in advanced economies to network via platforms like Facebook and Twitter²⁶⁶. This is so against the backdrop that “for most of the world’s population, connectivity remains too expensive, technically inaccessible, or unreliable”²⁶⁷. A study carried out by this researcher corroborated this as people in the developing world, especially Nigeria, have many limitations in using the Internet²⁶⁸.

Against the backdrop that technology can be used for both good and bad, digital technology for social change is a complex issue²⁶⁹. In fact, the impact of the Internet on how people communicate recently has created two camps of people referred to as “cyberpessimists” and “cyberoptimists”²⁷⁰. The former asserts that Internet use has a negative effect on social life. At the same time, the latter avers that the Internet has a positive impact on social life²⁷⁰. A scholar has reviewed some of the ground-breaking studies that explore how the advent and infiltration of modern communication technology throughout the world impacts violent conflicts²⁷¹.

With COVID-19 confining many people within the four walls of their homes, the Internet has become a ready resource or platform for interactions among people²⁷². This implies that more and more people are becoming prone to using the Internet²⁷³. A researcher corroborated this by stating how the Internet, especially “social media tools and social networking sites were adopted by several schools’ teachers and staff to communicate with

students and parents without any previous planning for disaster risk reduction and management” because of the COVID-19 pandemic²⁷⁴.

While “as of January 2021, there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide, with a penetration rate of 59.5 percent of the global population”, it is estimated that 46.6 percent of the people in Nigeria were users of the Internet in 2020 ^{274, 275}. In line with another report, “...Nigerians spend an average of three hours 30 minutes on social media, coming second after citizens of the Philippines who spend an average of four hours one minute per day”²⁷⁶. The high Internet penetration rate into the society and its great influence on the sustainability of religion in general has created a critical question of how is it possible for the Internet to “upload God” onto cyberspace or to “cyberize” God²⁷⁷.

Compared to other classical communication media, the Internet has unique characteristics. These characteristics include:

1. [The Internet] is a computer-based media.
2. As a media, it offers interactive and dynamic features for its users.
3. It might be an unlimited source of information.
4. It covers areas beyond continents, nations, and even more, beyond cultures and religion²⁷⁷.

2.1.4.4. Online Dispute Resolution (ODR)

A scholar described how modern technologies are altering the way people interact with one another in intense ways that are now unavoidably affecting the practice of dispute resolution²⁷⁸. The scholar expressly referred to a new trend in conflict resolution known as online dispute resolution (or ODR)²⁷⁸. The trend of ODR began when World Wide Web initially started gaining popularity in the 1990s when it was becoming clearer that online engagement would bring conflicts and debates as more human interactions are taking place in virtual space²⁷⁹. The importance of technology in ODR has made some scholars refer to technology as “the fourth party”²⁸⁰.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 “has profoundly impacted human society” and made information and communication technology gain more prominence throughout the world²⁸¹. This has caused people discover more ways of using online tools for dispute resolution²⁸². In the conclusion of a researcher, after studying the new challenges posed by COVID-19 and the possibilities of online mediation, it was asserted that online or electronic mediation is presenting itself as one of the most profitable ways in conflict resolution to confront the new challenges posed by COVID-19¹⁰⁰. Another researcher corroborated this in a study by stating,

As the world is expecting the further peaks or waves for COVID-19, mediators [and others stakeholders have] to be prepared for next stage. Mediators could promote online mediation as an efficient, fast, less costly and future based tool. It is worth to mention, that internet tools are also adapted more for online sessions, caucuses (It is possible to create separate “room” during the group meeting through various platforms), etc. Therefore, there are less and less reasons to avoid online mediation²⁸³.

As asserted by a scholar, in international legislation, there is no official definition of the term “online dispute resolution” and “ODR can mean many things to different users across cultures”²⁸². However, another researcher defined online dispute resolution (ODR) as “a form of online settlement that uses alternative methods for dispute resolution... [that] covers disputes that are partially or fully settled over the Internet, having been initiated in cyberspace but with a source outside it (offline)”²⁸⁴. ODR “describes the use of the internet as a tool to help resolve conflicts, drawing on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) concepts such as negotiation, mediation and arbitration”²⁸⁵. Other terms that are synonymous used with ODR are “electronic ADR (eADR), online ADR (oADR) and Internet dispute resolution (iDR)”²⁸⁶.

A scholar chronicled the growth of online dispute resolution²⁸⁰. ODR has gone through three stages: hobbyist, experimental, and entrepreneurial. In the initial stage, there was no recognized source of funding. Academics and non-governmental organizations took

up the challenge in the second stage. Lastly, in the third stage, commercial activities began to advance and give services on a wide basis. Technological advances accompany this evolution: from purely e-mail communication to sophisticated management systems²⁸⁰.

As veritable as ODR is with many advantages, it has to be noted that it has some limitations^{282, 280}. A scholar supported this by arguing that online interaction alone is not enough to resolve conflicts²²⁹. This is so because, in some cases, physical interaction is needed to resolve conflicts.

2.1.4.5. The Social Media

Terms used intermittently with social media are alternate media, new media, and online social network services (though this term is mostly used for a type of social media)²⁸⁶. Other terms used with social media are Web 2.0, digital media, peer media, and “NextGen PR”²⁸⁷. Social media can also be referred to as “participative Internet use”²⁸⁸.

Social media have been defined simply as “digital Web 2.0 platforms that facilitate information sharing, user-created content, and collaboration across people”²⁸⁹. The term “Web 2.0” means “the type of web site where people can retrieve, share, write, and store information as desired”²⁹⁰. As asserted by some scholars, “With the development of [this] Web 2.0 and GNSS-enabled portable devices, social media platforms, [for example], Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become increasingly popular worldwide for sharing feelings and discussing ‘what’s happening’”²⁸¹.

It is noteworthy here that some scholars have argued that social media is not new because its evolution started with the telephone instead of computers, as social media began with “phone phreaking” that began during the 1950s²⁹¹. The term “phone phreaking” is used to refer to the “rogue searching of the telephone network”²⁹¹. This procedure was attained by

using home-produced electronic devices that enabled the illegal right to use “to the telephone system to make free calls”²⁹¹.

Social media is seen as part of digital media, so, two scholars have defined social media on three specific characteristics, which are: 1) communication through social media is deinstitutionalized, as users choose their own communication channels; 2) the receiver also becomes a sender with the rise of user-generated content; and 3) communication through social media is interactive and runs through networks²⁹².

Broadly, social media are described as

Pervasive online (internet-activated) media platforms (also known as social network sites) that have global reach and are tremendously used by scores of millions of individuals, groups, governments, organizations and enterprises globally for various online socialization, marketing and communication activities virtually free or at relatively much lower costs (compared to accessing mainstream media)²⁹³.

Figure 2.8 shows the logos of some popular social media platforms.



Figure 2.8: Logos of Some Popular Social Media Platforms²⁹⁴

Social media are distinguished as *digital* because “they exist entirely on the Internet or portals that can access the Internet” like mobile phones and tablets, and as *platforms* that

“are different mechanisms or technological vehicles for connecting people and information” as they are enabling to some extent “permanent connection between friends, family, or even strangers”^{289, 225}. A scholar asserted, “Social media networks as different from the traditional media (television, radio, newspaper and magazine) do not only disseminate information, but also give room for interaction about the information given”²⁹⁵. Other ways in social media is different from the conventional media were highlighted by some scholars thus: “reach and usability; quality and permanence; and mostly, immediacy and permanence. Traditional media, in contrast, operates under a one-way communication model – one informer to numerous recipients”²⁹⁶.

Social media or online social network services vary “from Web blogs, to micro-sharing platforms, to live streams to social networks and much more”²⁶³. They focus on creating online communities of people who have similar interests and/or activities or are interested in exploring other people’s interests and activities^{297, 298}. Some online services offer the opportunity of having social networks with other people of similar interests. This has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. One can sign up and have a sort of “quasi-website” where one can create a network of friends²⁹⁹. These quasi-websites are in the form of forums, groups, blogs and the likes. They are the tools that have been created to engage people, motivate and encourage them to be better people and create better livelihoods for themselves³⁰⁰.

Social media involves interactive participation³⁰¹. This is because social media channels allow people to connect and interact, thereby allowing for more effective two-way communication and fostering conversation among the people³⁰². Social media platforms are more engaging, anonymous, worldwide, and offer constant availability and equality to their users²²⁹. As asserted by some scholars, “Social media has made the majority of its users, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural commentators; with everyone having his/her

own opinion as well as a platform to air such opinion even without adequate knowledge of the topic”¹⁴⁸.

Social media has transformed and added worth to “communication through content generation, interaction, engagement, sharing and networking”³⁰³. In the words of some scholars,

The emergence of social media or new media as it is sometimes referred to, has dared to defragment communication. This has occurred through the involvement of the audience in the creation and dissemination of information. This has thus altered existing structures and created a room to what is referred to as citizen journalism”²⁹⁶.

Through social media, the ordinary man has now been equipped with strong instruments for enriching social interactions²⁰⁵. Social media “transform users from *consumers* of content to *producers* of content. It supports democratization of knowledge and information because it empowers the users to make his/her voice heard, and provides more equal access to know knowledge and information”³⁰⁴. In the words of a scholar, “the social media phenomenon has decentralised the processes of information dissemination, thereby allowing audience the opportunity to partake in the creation and distribution of media contents”²⁸⁷. In the opinion of some scholars, “social media websites like Facebook, Twitter have become many common means for an individual to interact and exchange their lives immediately along with short messages, pictures and music”³⁰⁵. Some researchers have observed “social media technologies” as a triumph in information and communications technology in the 21st century and this has made “the development and usage of social media technologies” to become a lifestyle to many Nigerians³⁰⁶. However, in spite of the fact that social media is having a momentous influence on people’s daily lives and has become a “dependent factor” for humans, it has “made end-users accommodate less leisure time and spend less time on television, radio, newspapers, and magazines”³⁰⁷.

The origin of social media is traced to the 1980s and the Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) when there was a sort of online meeting room that permitted people to download games and other files, and leave messages to other co-users³⁰⁸. The social feature of this interaction was so clear, but the exchange was somewhat restricted and slow because of technological reasons³⁰⁸. In the views of some scholars,

Today's social networking sites, is said to have been spawned under the AOL (America Online) umbrella. It was referred to as "*Internet before the Internet*", in 1995, Classmates.com which today has about 57million registered users was created and it could be considered as the first to meet the modern definition of social media. After this, was the advent of Six Degrees and Asian Avenue, created in 1997, BlackPlanet created in 1999, [and] MiGente [created in] 2000. Friendster was launched in 2002 followed by LinkedIn and MySpace in 2003 and LinkedIn has over 297 million users today³⁰⁶.

Two scholars extensively discussed how to use social media, especially online social networks. The scholars further discussed the impacts of these posts on the users and the privacy conflicts the posts can have on the users. They thereby presented a "mechanism for detecting and resolving privacy conflicts in Social Media that adapt the conflict resolution strategy based on the particular situation"³⁰⁹.

Social media tools "are increasingly creating e-communities and e-societies that transcend geographical boundaries and de-territorializes nation-states"²⁶¹. The fact that social media needs little training and is not capital intensive makes it widely acceptable³¹⁰. Other reasons for the acceptability and popularity of social media are "various target audiences, global reach, and the unprecedented speed of information flow"³⁰⁸. Comparing the emergence and acceptance of social media to other means of communication, some researchers gave this information: "It took 38 years for 50 million people to have access to radio, 13 years for television and 4 years for the Internet to attract the same number of users. This only took a period of 12-months for Facebook to gain 200 million users"³⁰⁶. As asserted by another researcher, there were approximately 4.2 billion active social media users in 2020. This has

made social media users worldwide on a daily average to be online for almost 145 minutes³¹¹.

In another assertion that corroborated the above figures,

In 2020, 490 million new users joined social media, a growth rate of 13.2%. On average, users have accounts on eight different platforms and spend two-and-a-half hours per day on social media. As a result, social media increasingly shapes political and social interactions and, indeed, people's perceptions of reality¹³³.

The emergence and acceptability of social media have made the present generation easy access to any kind of information they want through the Internet, especially social media³¹². In fact, the emergence of social media has tremendously changed the face of communication throughout the world³¹³. This is against the backdrop that the growth of social media has positively influenced in diverse ways how “people, communities, and organizations communicate and interact”³¹⁴. A scholar corroborated this by saying:

The appearance of social media offered Internet users an unprecedented opportunity to connect with other people. The exchange of memories, experiences, opinions, views and agendas became easy and—over time—very cheap. Suddenly, one could find former classmates and reestablish regular contact and also discover new “friends” in dynamically growing social networks. And these “friends” could come from any part of the globe with Internet access, which means from almost all over the world³⁰⁸.

Other scholars supported this by saying, “Social media facilitates the creative display of information, while simultaneously influencing, motivating, and engaging individuals on important health issues”²⁸⁸.

In the world today, “four out of five people who have access to the Internet use social media”³¹⁵. In the last ten years, owing in part to the virtually universal accessibility and use of various social media, the use of the Internet has moved from “more consumption of information to producing and sharing one's own information”³¹⁶. Some alluded to the fact that in the United States, 90 per cent of adults aged 18 to 29 years were using at least one social media site in 2019. Additionally, “young adults represent the largest demographic of

users on most of the major platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube”²⁵. A researcher asserted that “Today”s Nigeria Youths spend hours surfing the net, engaging themselves in chatting and socializing on different social networking sites”³¹⁷. Against the backdrop of the growing popularity of social media, some scholars have averred that the world is experiencing what they termed “the social media revolution”³¹⁸. Like any other rendered service, some scholars noted,

Using social media also requires that users agree to certain terms and conditions (also called T&C or terms of service). These are rules and clauses which users must agree on, in order to use a service; these terms are usually binding to two parties (organisation and users). It includes a list of provisions such as a disclaimer of liability (owner takes no responsibility for any damages a user receives as a result of use), a licence of the copyright or agreement clause³⁰⁶.

There are ranges of activities on social media because “social media means different things to different people,” some scholars clarified these activities into two broad categories: active and passive³¹⁷. Active usage refers to activities that facilitate direct exchanges with other people in having “targeted one-on-one exchanges” and/or “non-targeted exchanges”³¹⁹. Passive usage refers to the monitoring of the lives of other people without engaging in direct exchanges with others. In passive usage, people usually have information without communicating with the informant or disseminating the information to other people^{319, 320}. Whether active or passive, it is concluded that “social media use has become an ever-present part of modern life”³²⁰.

Some motivations for using social media have been identified³²¹. These motivations are: “social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance or knowledge about others”³²². Two scholars termed the use of social media as “social media behaviours”³⁰⁷. The scholars further explained briefly these behaviours as ways of feeling safe, building one’s esteem, gaining physiological needs, gaining the feeling of

self-actualisation, and maximising their attractiveness³⁰⁷. Figure 2.9 gives a graphic picture of what motivate people to use social media as revealed in a study:

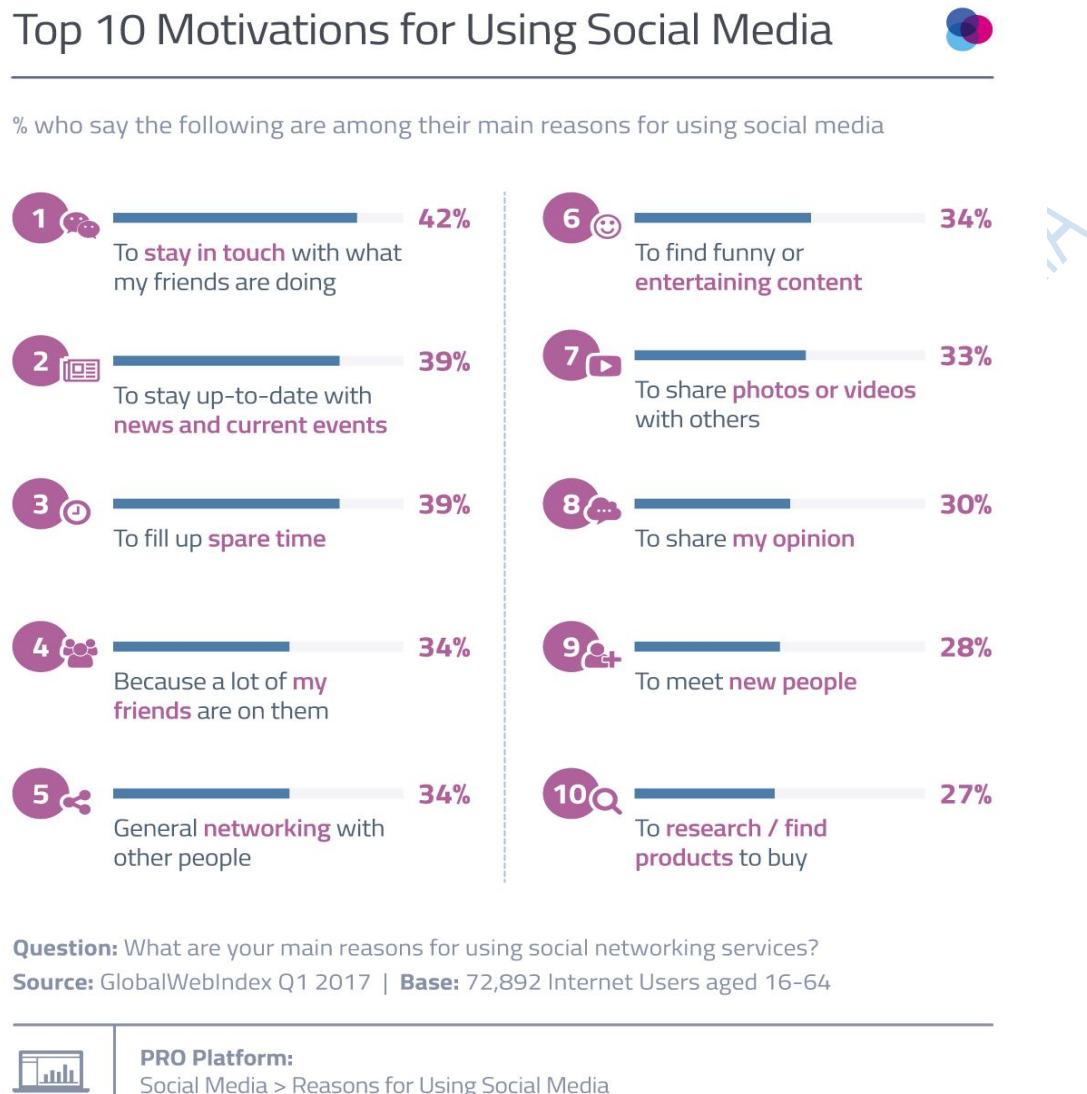


Figure 2.9: Reasons for Using Social Media³²³

Although much of people's communication recently about social issues takes place online, two scholars opined that using social media to nurture social change is becoming difficult³²⁴. The scholars gave and explained four reasons for this problem. These reasons are:

- 1) the preferences of social media users differ "by age, gender, education, and platform used, with millennials preferring image based social media such as

Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, while still maintaining accounts on multiple sites including Facebook and others”;

- 2) “social media metrics privilege ‘speaking’ rather than ‘listening’ in how they measure impact and influence”;
- 3) the way many social media platforms are designed technically often limits people’s ability to be involved in healthy discussions around complex social issues; and
- 4) social media users have diverse social and communication skill sets³²⁴.

Despite these limitations, these scholars believed that “social media have an important role to play in societal change as liberal-minded organizations, and social movements, can use social media to structure public discussions and actions around wicked problems³²⁴.

Many articles and books have been written on the impact (both positive and negative) of social media on the society in general and various groups of people in the society²⁶². Nonetheless, an online source highlighted seven areas that social media that have had an impact on the world. These seven areas are politics, society, commerce, the world of work, moral challenges, personal relationships, and most especially information dissemination³²⁵. While a researcher asserted that “building a presence on social media is becoming an essential part of humans,” the researcher was also of the opinion that “the application of social media platforms can assist in managing any lack of presence”³²⁷. An online source specifically listed various social platforms that social media provide for people, especially the youths. These include:

1. Great communication tools to connect with loved ones and old friends irrespective of locations.
2. Access to positive and free information being shared on Social Media.
3. Opportunities to promote their businesses to a larger and wider audience.
4. Social Capital.
5. An avenue to contribute to emotional wellbeing of others by offering positive advices.
6. Opportunities to launch businesses online

7. Opportunities to market businesses online at little or no cost.
8. Real time sharing of information for businesses through paid and unpaid advertising³²⁸.

A scholar identified some ways people are using social media. They acknowledged these ways as advantages of social media. These ways are connecting people globally, entertainment, helping needy and poor people, business promotions and Advertising, the source for getting the latest news updates and information, a platform for freedom of speech and expression, provision of the best learning options and opportunities (education), and the option of searching for a job³²⁹. However, this scholar also admitted that social media also has its disadvantages like breach of privacy and personal details, cybercrime or cyber-bullying, and the rise of fake news³²⁹. This is regarded by a scholar as the “Mis, Dis, and Mal-information” of social media³¹¹. These disadvantages are because of the “faceless nature” of social media¹⁴⁸. This has made a researcher recommend a stringent control of the use of social media³³⁰. However, such control must be done with caution so that the fundamental human right of freedom of speech will not be threatened. Another disadvantage of social media is that it has been taken by terrorists “for a variety of reasons, including disseminating propaganda, recruiting sympathizers and followers as well as securing funding and coordinating activities”²⁴³. Another “dark side” of social media has been observed by some scholars called “social media-induced jealousy (SoMJ)” – a situation where a person feels worse about his/her own life after seeing the content of another person on social media³³¹.

Social media, in general, and online social networking, in particular, have been identified as two out of the three information and communications technologies that trigger the explosion of the “the global web of users creating content for and conversations with each other” (or simply “social web”). Mobile Communications (or instant message applications) are the third information and communications technologies³³². A scholar thought that social

media have become increasingly universal as evident in their use in many throughout the world³³³. Nevertheless, it is worrisome to observe the spread of insulting, fanatical, and terrorism-related contents through many widely used online social platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook³³⁴.

The usage of social media is increasing in acceptance in Nigeria every day²¹⁸. A scholar asserted that “about 15.8% of the population of Nigeria is active on social media platforms”³³⁵. Social media is indeed playing a significant role in contemporary Nigeria society³³⁶. In line with an online source, “Nigeria is ranked number 7 for internet users globally. In 2018, about 22.4 million (11.2%) Nigerians were active Facebook users each month, Twitter ranked second with 8.35%.... The popularity of social media in Nigeria increases with mobile penetration and as data costs fall”³³⁷. According to a recent report, “The main social media platforms in Nigeria are WhatsApp and Facebook”²⁵¹.

2.1.4.6. Categories of Social Media

Some scholars have categorized various types of social media by basing them on their distinctive characteristics. Among these are “blogs [and micro blogs (like Twitter, Koo)], cooperative projects (such as Wikipedia), content communities (such as YouTube), virtual social world (such as second life) and social networking sites (such as Facebook and MySpace)”²⁵⁴. Other scholars identified other categories like Virtual Second World (Second Life) and Virtual Game World (World of warcraft)²⁶³. Furthermore, some scholars suggested that social media can be divided into four types. The suggested types are:

1. **Quick-time (time sensitive):** Transfer of traditional social media application to mobile services to increase immediacy (posting twitter messages, status update [2go], and updating display picture [dp] [bbm]).
2. **Slow-timers (neither location nor time sensitive):** transfer traditional social media application to mobile devices (reading a wikipedia entry).

3. **Space-timers (location and timesensitive):** exchange of message with relevance for specific location and time (Facebook, 2go, BB chat).
4. **Space-locators (location sensitive):** exchange message with relevance for one specific location which are tagged to certain place (yelp, syte)²⁶³.

Nonetheless, this researcher agrees with some scholars that grouped social media into only two categories: online social network services (SNS) or online social networks (ONS) and instant messaging (IM) apps³³⁸. On most occasions, the term “social media” is used interchangeably with “online social network services”. As a result, many people neglect instant messaging (IM) apps when referring to or discussing social media. Further discussion and study by this researcher are based on these two categories.

2.1.4.6.1. Online Social Network Services

Online social network sites (SNS) are defined simply as “a set of interconnected individuals who communicate with each other via computer-based technologies rather than interacting face-to-face”³³⁹. As cited by two researchers, a broader definition of online social network sites (SNS) is given as

a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site³²⁰.

As asserted by a scholar, “technological innovation has led to the development of many social networking sites (SNSs)”³³⁹. Therefore, the use of online social network sites (SNS) has become commonplace activity for many people because of the possibilities of users in communicating and forming relations with other users³⁴⁰. This is feasible because of the popularity of mobile support that has made people use online social network sites without time and space limitations³⁴¹. Recent statistic has it that the number of people that are using

social network services globally have reached 3.96 billion, with a yearly rise of 10.5 per cent³⁴². This has made virtual interpersonal relationships to be strengthened and developed into long-term associations between such relationships³³⁹. However, as discovered by two scholars in a study, while social media is strengthening the online social networks, it is weakening physical interpersonal relations²⁵⁹.

There are many advantages of online social networking sites. These advantages include a worldwide spread of the use of social networking sites. This has reduced geographical barriers that used to hinder communication. Online social networking sites have also created opportunities to exchange opinions and increase prospects for participation and expression of opinion. These online social sites have also penetrated all spheres of life like education, politics, media and commerce, and the likes³⁴³.

Moreover, online social network sites are different from “traditional forms of media by their immediacy, interactivity, active participation, and circle of connectedness”³⁴⁴. At least, seven different types of social media or rather online social network services (SNS) were identified in an online source³⁴⁵. As expounded by this source (biteable.com, which itself is a form of social media), these types of platforms are:

1. *Social networking sites*: these “are web-based services allowing individuals to construct a semi-public or public profile in a bounded system”³⁴⁶. These sites “have been used to bridge communication and connections” by helping people to be connected with friends, family, and brands. They encourage sharing of knowledge²²⁴. They are all about personal, human-to-human interaction where users can share thoughts, upload photos and videos, form groups based on interests, and participate in lively discussions. These sites are all over the place today and they being used by people of all ages and for the various purposes³¹⁸. As opined by some researchers, these social network sites “have become more and more integrated into the lives of

users [as] individuals share an incredible amount of information about themselves on the platforms”²³⁷. The shared information includes “photos, videos, thoughts, writings, and even friendship”³⁴⁷. Examples of these are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn³⁴⁶.

2. *Social review sites*: these sites display reviews from members of the public for all sorts of places and experiences. This reduces a lot of the guesswork that goes into the reservation of a restaurant or hotel because the reviews will tell about the customer experience from the customer’s own point of view and allow them to engage with reviewers and solve any potential challenges before they become a huge transaction. TripAdvisor, Ebay, Jumia, Amazon and the likes are examples of these social review sites³⁴⁵.
3. *Image sharing sites*: these sites are designed to amplify the power of image sharing. Users can create and share unique images that spark conversation and speak for themselves in these sites. Examples of these are Instagram, Imgur, and Snapchat³⁴⁵.
4. *Video hosting sites*: these sites help users create and put together content and share it to a platform enhanced for streaming. These contents are mostly videos. YouTube and Vimeo are good examples of this type of social media³⁴⁵.
5. *Community blogs (or simply blogs)*: these sites allow people to express their thoughts and help connect them with readers. This can be done through blogs like Medium, Tumblr, WordPress, Blogger, Ning, and the likes³⁴⁵.
6. *Discussion sites*: these sites are specifically designed to trigger a conversation. In these sites, anyone is free to ask a question or make a statement, which attracts people with shared interests and curiosities. With these sites, people can find and engage other people in their field, discover what they are asking, and use this as a starting point for their content publicizing strategy. Reddit and Quora are good examples of discussion sites³⁴⁵.

7. *Sharing economy networks*: these sites bring people who have got something they want to share together with the people who need it. These sites provide opportunities that will not exist otherwise by combining resources on a large scale that would not be possible without social media. Examples of these sites are AirBnB and Rover³⁴⁵.

Apart from these types of social network sites explained, there are also Academic Social-Networking sites (ASNS) such as Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Mendeley, and Zotero becoming very popular among academics³⁴⁸. These academic social network sites “are specific to researchers affiliated with academic institutes and specialize in academic activities such as sharing studies, articles, and information”³⁴⁹. Academic social network sites include a diversity of online platforms that are seeking to take the advantages of online networking to a particular academic audience³⁵⁰. Like many other social network sites, these sites allow following and being followed by peers³⁵¹. Academic social network sites can be categorized into two categories. These categories are:

those which have been developed primarily to facilitate profile creation and connection (analogous to Facebook; examples include Academia.edu and ResearchGate), and those with a primary focus on posting and sharing academic related content and have subsequently added social networking capabilities (such as Mendeley)³⁵⁰.

Some scholars described five main affordances of academic social networks for researchers. These are: to manage one’s personal identity online, to publish academic works, to collaborate with other researchers, to manage personal academic information, and to measure the impact of one’s published academic works in terms of the number of citations of an article and the quality of the journals in which the article appears³⁴⁹.

Although some examples of online social network services have been mentioned above, it is expedient to explain some of them more. These are:

- 1) *Geocities*: although this was one of the first social media sites created in 1994, the first recognizable social network site (SNS) was SixDegrees.com^{300, 330}. Geocities was

launched in 1997 and allowed users to create profiles and list their friends. However, in spite of the fact that this SNS attracted millions of users, it failed to become a sustainable business, so, in 2000, the service closed down³⁵².

- 2) *Facebook*: Mark Zuckerberg and a group of fellow Harvard University students founded Facebook as a social network service in 2004, primarily, to get to know their classmates^{353, 354}. It has since evolved dramatically and grown to over a billion users worldwide³⁵⁵. In fact, it has become the most widely used social media today³⁵⁶. More is discussed on this later.
- 3) *Twitter*: Twitter is a social network and micro-blogging service created by Jack Dorsey in 2006³⁵⁷. Users can send and receive messages (called tweets) of up to 140 characters at a time. Pictures and videos can also be sent through Twitter. Twitter users can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. More is discussed on this later.
- 4) *Koo*: this is another microblogging platform launched in March 2020 that was previously known as *Ku Koo Ku* by Aprameya Radhakrishna and Mayank Bidwatka³⁵⁸. It resembles Twitter in most of its features. In fact, it was launched as an Indian alternative to Twitter³⁵⁹. What makes Koo different from Twitter is its provision for the Indian vernaculars and other languages³⁶⁰. Another advantage of Koo over Twitter is that while Twitter allows only 140 characters in a post or “tweet”, Koo allows 400 characters³⁶¹.
- 5) *YouTube*: This is a video-sharing website created by Jawed Karim, Steve Chen, and Chad Hurley, who used to be employees of PayPal in 2005 before Google, bought it was over in 2006³⁶². Users can upload and share videos on YouTube. While unregistered users can view the videos, only registered users can upload as many videos as possible.

- 6) *Google+ (or Google Plus)*: This is a social networking project designed by Google to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services³⁶³. This service was shut down on April 2, 2019³⁶⁴.
- 7) *LinkedIn*: LinkedIn is a social network service that focuses on building business or professional relationships. It was founded in 2002. The goal of the service is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally³⁶⁵. It has been regarded as the largest business-oriented social network service³³².
- 8) *Instagram*: Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on other social networking platforms³⁶⁶.
- 9) *Ning*: Ning makes it easy to launch your own social network in a matter of minutes. It gives you the tools and expertise to nurture and engage your own community on the largest, most scalable, and integrated social platform of its kind³⁶⁷.
- 10) *Wikipedia*: This is a free, open content online encyclopaedia created in 2001 through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication. Registration is not required to edit articles³⁶⁸.

This list is not exhaustive as there are other social network services like Hi5.com, Pinterest.com, and Multiply.com. There are also numerous *dating sites* like Match.com, OurTme.com, Hinge, Hitch, HowAboutWe.com, OkCupid.com, Grindr.com, Down Dating (downapp.com), Bumble.com and others. Two researchers have also identified some indigenous social media platforms in Nigeria such as *Nairaland*, *allAfrica*, *NAIJA.com*, *OnlineNigeria*, *YNaija.com*, *Amverified.ng*, among other numerous blogs that “have democratised information dissemination and sharing” in Nigeria²⁵⁹.

2.1.4.6.2. Instant Messaging (IM) Applications

There are other kinds of social media that have unique ways of sharing information in form of text messages, pictures, audio and video clips. Some of them even offer free calls! Because they are mostly used on mobile smartphones, they are also referred to as mobile instant messaging (MIM)³⁶⁹. These are called instant messaging (IM) applications (or apps). Instant messaging (IM) has become important in communication for supporting practicality and speed in real-time chat, which is not facilitated by e-mail because conversation via IM can last 20 seconds on average, thereby making it an efficient means to get a quick response from a chat³⁷⁰.

Against the backdrop that most of the instant messaging apps use the phone numbers of users to operate the apps, “newly registered users can thus conveniently and instantly start messaging existing contacts based on their phone number without the need to exchange additional information like user names, email addresses, or other identifier”³⁷¹. In the view of this researcher, while this has its advantages like easily finding people’s information through the apps, it also has its disadvantages as it easily exposes users to many dangers. To curb this, some researchers studied how to control contact discovery on instant messaging apps³⁷¹.

Examples of Instant messaging (IM) apps are

- 1) *Yahoo Messenger*: this was an advertisement-supported instant messaging client and associated protocol provided by Yahoo!. It was no longer supported after July 17, 2018, but has been replaced with other instant messaging apps³⁷².
- 2) *BlackBerry Messenger (BBM)*: this is a branded data-based instant messenger and videotelephony application that allows messaging (and videocalls for some smartphones) between BBM users. The manufacturer of the BlackBerry, that is, BlackBerry Limited (formerly known as Research In Motion Limited [RIM]),

developed it. BBM used to be the best way to connect and share instant messages, pictures and more for free, in real time. Until recently, only people that own BlackBerry smartphones could exclusively use BBM. However, as announced during BlackBerry Live 2013, BBM officially has gone cross-platform on Android and iOS since October 21, 2013. With this, people with Android phones, Galaxy Tabs, iPhones and even iPads can now use BBM application on their devices. Unlike other instant messaging apps that use one's phone number or email address as one's identifier, BBM uses a PIN (personal identification number) to always control who can contact them. This means that one can share one's PIN while maintaining one's privacy and always controlling who can contact them. BBM automatically comes with every BlackBerry smartphone with a unique PIN. When one installs BBM on Android or iPhone, one will be assigned a new PIN. One's PIN is unique to one's device³⁷³.

- 3) *WhatsApp Messenger*: WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app that allows you to exchange messages, images, audio or video without paying for SMS but using the Internet. WhatsApp Messenger is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia³⁷⁴. It can also be used on a computer by simply going to the Whatsapp website and downloading it to Mac or Windows. It is becoming the most popular IM app. More is discussed on this later.
- 4) *Telegram Messenger*: this is similar to WhatsApp Messenger. It is super-fast, simple and free, and can be used on any Internet-enabled device³⁷⁵. More is discussed on this later.
- 5) *Skype*: this is a telecommunications application software product that specializes in providing video chat and voice calls between computers, tablets, mobile devices, and smartwatches via the Internet and to regular telephones. Skype additionally provides instant messaging services³⁷⁶.

- 6) *FaceTime*: this is a video-calling application designed by Apple on the iPhone, iPad, and Mac. It exclusively supports one-on-one calling (that is, no group calling). It can only be used to call someone with a compatible Apple device. Unlike other similar video-calling applications, it will not work on Windows or Android phones³⁷⁷. Its IM app is known as iMessage, and it replaces text message features on iPhones, especially if the message is sent to another iPhone user³⁷⁷.
- 7) *Zoom*: this is a video communications platform with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, chat, and webinars³⁷⁸.
- 8) *Signal*: this is “a ratcheting forward secrecy protocol that works in synchronous and asynchronous messaging environments”³⁷⁹. It is an instant messaging app supported by Android and IOS operation systems, which “is free and open source software application [that] allows users to send message to each other, do encrypted calls, and send photograph and video with end-to-end encryption”^{380, 381}.
- 9) *Imo Messenger*: this is another instant messenger app and communication tool developed by imo.im for computers and mobile devices³⁸².
- 10) *2go*: 2go is a mobile messenger that allows you to communicate for free with your friends. It is a network of millions of people where you can set up your profile, talk to friends, share files and pictures, and meet new people³⁸³.
- 11) *Viber*: Viber is a mobile application that allows you to make phone calls and send text messages to all other Viber users for free! Viber is available over WiFi or 3G. Once you and your friends install Viber, you can use it to talk and message as much as you want³⁸⁴.

2.4.6.3. Overview of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram

As shown in Figure 2.10, only Facebook and Twitter as social network services (SNS) and WhatsApp and Telegram as instant messaging apps out of many categories of social media are focused on in the study. Therefore, it is expedient to discuss these two kinds of social media more.

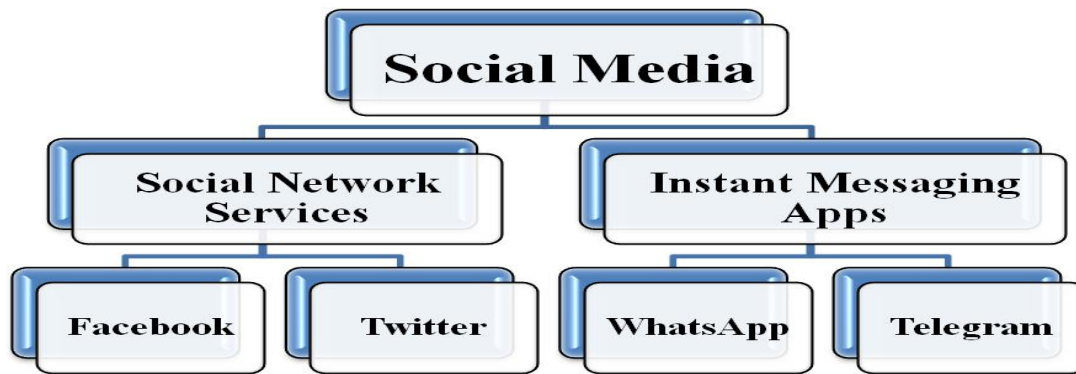


Figure 2.10: Some Selected Categories of Social Media

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

i. Facebook³⁵⁴

As indicated above, Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and a group of fellow Harvard University students as a social network service in 2004, primarily, to get to know their classmates³⁵³. Facebook has been recognized as the most popular social network platform globally with “a reported increase of monthly active users from 100 million in 2008 to 2.27 billion in 2018”³¹⁴. To corroborate this, a researcher noted that Facebook is the “biggest social media network on the Internet, both in terms of a total number of users and name recognition”³⁸⁵. The researcher further stated that in less than twelve years, Facebook has had an accumulation of over 1.59 billion people that monthly use the social network actively. This has automatically made Facebook one of the best means for linking people from all over the world³⁸⁵. Another study reported: “As of 31 December 2017, Facebook with its inbuilt Messenger had 2.13 billion monthly active users around the world”¹⁵. According to

some statistics, an “average Facebook user has 338 friends... while 15% of Facebook users have more than 500 friends”³⁴². As one of the two most frequently visited websites on the whole Internet, Facebook consistently competes with Google³⁸⁶. There is an estimation of over 4 million Nigeria users on Facebook in Nigeria. This makes Nigeria rated 35th in the world in the number of users of Facebook³⁴⁶. Compared to other social media platforms, “Facebook with 56.46% has the highest percentage of social media users in Nigeria”³³⁵.

Some researchers opined that Facebook can improve people’s ability to connect with others and form positive relationships with other people. Besides, it can allow people to interact with the thoughts of other people as they could see how these people respond to one another and the aftermath and reasons of a failed communication²⁰¹. Some researchers noted that Facebook was initially meant for social purposes. Nonetheless, it has since branched out to embrace shopping and company pages³⁸⁷. A study has revealed that Facebook and Twitter are now passageways to news. However, they are not substitutes for traditional news platforms³⁸⁸. Interestingly, many traditional news platforms now have online social networks platforms like Facebook and Twitter pages³⁸⁸. These platforms have improved the promptness of delivery, better interactivity, and plasticity by increasing audience access to news on the move without having to go in front of big computers³⁸⁸.

In the words of some scholars, Facebook is one of the social media platforms that “serve as coping strategies driven by internal needs for relatedness and social connections”³⁸⁹. Two researchers thought that “Facebook is a powerful platform that Christians use for fruitful Christian life and ministry”³⁹⁰. The researchers enumerated some positive and negative impacts of Facebook on Christians. The positive impacts include global mission, church marketing, the introduction of new songs, online prayer group, photos and video sharing, increase traffic to the church website, biblical counselling, seminars and workshops and Christian conferences. The negative impacts include tagged “unfruitful influence” are low

view of authority/over-focus on equality, short attention span/limited learning style, “shallow” interactions/artificial relationships, low commitment/accountability, lack of physical presence, social isolation, deceit, poor sleeping habits, immorality, the spread of fake news and vulnerable to scam³⁹⁰.

As good as Facebook is, especially in interacting with other people online, its easy disposition to spread hate speech and fake news is a major concern to many researchers. This has made two researchers recommend moderation in the use of Facebook³⁹¹. More is discussed on this social network site in Appendix V.

ii. Twitter

Jack Dorsey created this social network and micro-blogging service in 2006³⁵⁷. It is “a microblogging and globally known social media platform [that] has provided social and commercial platforms for millions of humans across the globe”³³⁵. In the words of some scholars, “Twitter is an extremely popular microblogging platform that allows people to write and share short messages among digital users”³⁹². On the network, users can send and receive messages (called tweets) of up to 140 characters that those who choose to “follow” the “tweeter”³⁹³. Individuals, grassroots movements, and political and social elites use it “to directly communicate to the public and influence opinion”³⁹⁴. It is also “used for information sharing, social interaction, information seeking, mobilization, content, and new technology gratifications”³⁹⁵. Likewise, pictures and videos can be sent through Twitter. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices²⁹⁸. Twitter is considered one of the most popular online social network services, with more than 554 million active users, competing with other popular online social network services³⁹². Meanwhile, some scholars asserted that “Twitter has 328 million active users every month who tweet at 230000 messages per minute”³⁹². Compared to other social media

platforms, “Twitter is second with 25.52% of users among the total number of social media users in Nigeria”³³⁵. Some researchers thought that “...Twitter has become an indispensable social communication platform by offering many contrasting views and cultures on miscellaneous topics”²⁵⁸. In the words of two scholars, “The interactive, participatory, and decentralized character of Twitter is an essential point of excellence for Twitter compared to other social media”³⁹⁶. Nonetheless, some researchers thought that Twitter frequently has offensive and terrorism-related contents³³².

A study has shown that Twitter is mostly used in the English-speaking world, particularly in the United States of America that profits from the chances to share information and be involved in a dynamic exchange of opinions²⁸⁷. In the words of some scholars, “In Nigeria, Twitter has become among the political and corporate elites, a rallying point for provoking discourses and putting pressing urgent issues on the front burner”²⁵⁹. The impacts of Twitter on news dissemination have been mentioned under Facebook above. As social media have become part of “the geopolitical landscape”, even world leaders and officials are more and more using Twitter to disseminate information during crises³⁹⁷.

One prominent feature of Twitter in particular, and other social media in general, is the use of hashtags (#) that “have now become a useful discourse strategy”³⁹⁸. A researcher thought that this unique techno-communicative opportunity has become a valuable tool for political and other purposes as hashtags are increasingly being used to monitor and disseminate current events, topics, issues and trending messages globally³⁹⁸. Another prominent feature of Twitter is what is known as the “cyber community.” Two researchers explained this to mean “gathering people who have a common interest or other things that impact their own culture in the world *cyber* commonly called *cyberculture*”³⁹⁶. More is discussed on this social network site in Appendix VI.

iii. WhatsApp

The use of WhatsApp Instant Messaging evolved from the advents of the smartphone technology³⁹⁹. WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app that permits people to interchange messages, images, audio or video using the Internet without having to pay for SMS. It is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia. One can also use it on a computer by downloading it to Mac or Windows on the WhatsApp website⁴⁰⁰. Three things are needed to use WhatsApp Messenger: a compatible smartphone tablet with a SIM card, a phone number and an Internet connection⁴⁰¹. Its instantaneous and convenient means of sharing of information has become the most popular instant message (IM) app with over 600 million users^{399, 401}.

A researcher argued that WhatsApp Messenger is “by far the largest user base, and the strongest corporate backing since its acquisition by Facebook in 2014”⁴⁰². As of the third quarter of 2017, most popular social network in Nigeria was mobile messenger WhatsApp with a 41 per cent penetration rate⁴⁰³. However, in more recent statistics, WhatsApp has more than 90 million users, making it “rated first with the highest social media users”³³⁵. One very prominent feature in WhatsApp Messenger is the WhatsApp Group, with other features attached to it⁴⁰⁰. To corroborate this, a researcher opined, “Not only is WhatsApp often more cost effective than SMS, but it facilitates large group conversations, something that is difficult through SMS, if not impossible”⁴⁰². This researcher highlighted some other features of WhatsApp Messenger that make it unique from other social media platforms⁴⁰².

One demerit of WhatsApp Messenger, as identified by some scholars, is that it only “supports communication with the existing neighborhood and does not have the uses to help make new friends”³⁹⁵. More is discussed on this instant messaging in Appendix VII.

iv. Telegram

Telegram Messenger, founded by Pavel Durov, is a cloud-based instant messaging service similar to WhatsApp Messenger^{404, 405}. It is super-fast, simple and free, and it can be used on mobile phones, computers or any Internet-enabled device³⁷⁵. Telegram Messenger is also becoming one of the leading instant messaging apps, with over 100 million that are actively using the app every month because of its numerous secured features^{404, 381}. Apart from its group feature, it also has another similar feature known as “channel”. More is discussed on this instant messaging in Appendix VIII.

2.1.4.7. Philosophical and Theological Basis for Social Media

Human beings are rational and social beings³⁹⁰. They were created to think and relate with other people. The way the human body is created is to get nurtured through the needed nutrients that people eat. Likewise, the human mind is nurtured by the existing news and information that is always available through our present-day technology³⁰⁷. An important aspect of people’s sociality is their ability to change and adapt their behavior in response to internal (like emotion, expectations) and external (like audience, environment) influences³⁸⁷. A philosopher posited that “the reality of human existence today is that man lives in a fast-paced and constantly changing global society,” and, as another scholar opined, “life would [be] boring without communication”^{406, 407}. As another researcher averred, the reason is that “Information is an essential means of human functioning, it also a channel of transmitting and transforming ideas among every individual. People communicate with one another to share ideas, disseminate information, persuade and facilitate connections”³⁴⁶.

In thinking and relating with other people, a person presents him/herself to other people with an objective⁴⁰⁸. It is remarkable to note that the Almighty God is a communicating and information-sharing Creator (Genesis 1:26-30)³⁹⁰. The entire creation could be because God communicates through Word. The completeness of communication

and revelation of God was fully manifested when the Word became flesh and lived among people (John 1:14)⁴⁰⁹. Here is a translation of John 1:1-5:

In the beginning was the communication and communication was with God and Communication was God. Communication was with God in the beginning. Through communication all things were made; without communication nothing was made that has been made. In Communication was life, and that life was the light of human beings⁴¹⁰.

Human beings were created by God in His image and likeness. So, from the instruction that God ordered humans in Genesis 1:26-28, God gives the authority to humans to be managers, or “God on earth” in handling His creation, because humans have been created His image⁴¹¹. God did this to make humans communicating and information sharing creatures (see Genesis 3:6-12). Consequently, communication and information sharing are important in relationships as an interaction between God and human beings and vice versa (Genesis 4:1-10)⁴¹². Christians are expected to reflect God in communicating with other people in various ways as image-bearers of God who did not stop communicating after the creation process but still communicates till date in different ways (Hebrews 1:1-3). Social media is one of such ways.

Christians, as salt and light of the world (see Matthew 5:13-16), are to be like the tribe of Issachar, “who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chronicles 12:32) and make things that will sweeten the bitterness of the world and brighten the darkness of the world. For the purpose of the betterment of the society, they should join other men that have invented many things like “the sartorial, the architectural, the orchestral, the automotive, ... discursive communicative media such as spoken language, smoke signals, forms of signage, ...written language [and] electronically mediated communications, such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and Internet”⁴¹³.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) generally and social media specifically have been linked to two biblical bases. The first one is “Everything is created by

God”⁴¹⁴. In His sovereignty, generosity and self-sufficiency, God created everything (Genesis 1). The word, wisdom and power of God sustained and maintained this creation (see Job 38-40; Amos 4:13; Matthew 10:29-30; Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 3:7). “Technological advances and ICT [in general, and social media in particular] are essentially ‘very good’ [compare Genesis 1:31] because they come ‘from the Father, from whom all things come’ (1 Cor. 8:6)”⁴¹⁴. God has empowered human beings to invent and develop things for the betterment of humanity. It has been noted by some scholars that any time scientists invent anything that was not known before in nature, theistic scientists would claim that such invention belongs to God¹⁴. Social media is part of such discovery and improvement, and humanity should use it for their good. “Everything is corrupted by the idolatrous attitude”⁴¹⁴. The “very good” picture of Genesis 1 was shattered with the breaking of man's divine rules (or the Fall) in Genesis 3. This was the beginning of the era of perverse and idolatrous relation of the created order with the Creator. Thus, the “nature, source of well-being and fulfilment, is now cursed, generating discomfort and pain (Gen. 3:17)”⁴¹⁴. It can also be referred to in the event of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, “where people were amazed with the result of their work”⁴⁰⁹. This has led to “the current reality of ICT, where the relations with the other and the environment are distorted and negatively affected, are symptoms of a problem greater than that of excessive, unlimited and irresponsible use”⁴¹⁴. This has caused many people to have the opinion that technology generally, and social media specifically, is god⁴⁰⁹. This is spoken of as “cyberidolatry”³⁵². The aftereffects of this are “cyberharassment” or “cyberextortion”, cyberbullying, “cybermatoneo”, cyber fraud, pornography, online gambling, “sexting” and other immoralities⁴¹⁴. Another social media vice that is similar to cyberbullying is “cyberstalking”⁴¹⁵. Similarly, some scholars have recently identified another social media vice known as “cyber racism” that promotes xenophobia and other forms of racial discriminations through social media⁴¹⁶.

In spite of the vices resulting from technological tools generally and social media specifically as pointed out above, technological tools generally and social media specifically are veritable tools to promote religions as they “can enhance religious practices through the expansion and creation of religious communities”³⁸⁵. Likewise, technological tools generally and social media specifically currently likely “play a vivifying role in religious organizations’ ongoing adaptation and composition as spiritual communities”⁴¹⁷. A scholar asserted, “...demonstrated unprecedented magical powers of speed, efficiency and cost effectiveness in attaining many facets of human endeavour” through social media²⁹⁵. So, social media has dramatically fortified the fulfilment of the biblical injunctions concerning communal living and connection with other humans to warrant a thriving community (see 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12: 25-17; 1 John 1:7; Galatians 6:2; Proverbs 17:17; 27:17; Matthew 18:20; Romans 12:5, 16; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Acts 2:44-47; Ephesians 4:2-6).

A researcher opined that since God created man that invented technologies and social media, God has to interact with the man who is fallible in man’s invention⁴⁰⁹. Therefore, man can use digital technologies and social media to propagate what pertain to God to other human beings and “nourish the spiritual growth and development of the person as well as his relationship with God”⁴⁰⁹. However, as earlier pointed out, social media has its positive and negative effects on the created beings³⁹⁰.

2.1.4.8. The Use of Social Media in Conflict Resolution

Many views by scholars on social media and conflict resolution and/or peacebuilding have been reviewed above under the subheading of the technological tools. However, more reviews are still being made here. While a scholar thought that “there is no singular, universal, or unilateral way in which social media has been contributing to peacebuilding,” some other scholars argued that social media networks are “rapidly rewriting the principles and protocols

of war and conflict reporting”^{418, 286}. This is against the backdrop as two scholars asserted, “Conflicts are an integral part of communication in social media”⁴¹⁹. The growth of technological tools has changed the information space around conflict by providing an increasing number of people with the instruments to record and share their experiences with other people in the world²²⁶. An expert in peacebuilding has identified and explained four areas where social media, in particular, is influencing conflict dynamics. These areas are: “incitement to violence; the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda; recruitment into armed groups; and the growing role of social media to suppress opposition”⁴²⁰. It was the opinion of some researchers that “While social media platforms hold great promise for promoting an inclusive public sphere, they are simultaneously susceptible to nefarious manipulation, including rampant harassment and echo chambers that silence political debates and amplify the spread of disinformation”⁴²¹. Furthermore, a distinction has been made between misinformation and disinformation. While misinformation is “when false or out-of-context information or facts are shared and reported as truth,” disinformation, in contrast, is “the deliberate fabrication of information designed for nefarious purposes”²³⁶.

There have been arguments about whether social media is good or bad or neutral. This is against the backdrop that social media “can be used for social good, such as overturning oppressive regimes or bringing income inequality to the forefront of national and international discussions. At the same time, there will always be those who leverage technology in ways that were unintended by the designers”⁴²². In support of this, a researcher chronicled some illustrations of activities on Facebook and Twitter that demonstrated how social media is a “place for both good and destructive conflict resolution”⁴²³. These illustrations include “the Arab Spring (2011), #BlackLivesMatter (2013), #BringBackOurGirls (2014) and #MeToo (2017), among others”⁴²³. The most recent one is

the #EndSARS – a protest against Police brutality in Nigeria – that almost paralysed the country in 2020⁴²⁴. In a recent study about the role of social media, especially Facebook, on the #EndSARS protest, it was revealed that social media has become a major means of disseminating information (especially about conflicts)³²¹. Furthermore, it was recommended that users of social media should be enlightened on how to use social media responsibly so that it will not escalate the conflict it is being used to report³²¹.

Recently, research was carried out to have a better understanding of how “the interplay of online and off-line dynamics creates opportunities for social media narratives to gain traction and contribute to conflict” in some countries, including Nigeria⁴²⁵. Parts of the findings of the research are: threats of social media are not limited to users of social media; trust in social media narratives are usually informed by offline social networks; and access and vulnerability to social media vary across class, age, gender, and geography⁴²⁵. In another research, it was discovered that social media can play a more significant role in building peace in many ways⁴²⁶. Among these ways are: providing new perceptions in understanding conflict contexts and thereby informing how interventions are designed; magnifying peaceful voices while influencing the public and political description; and forming new spaces for people to connect, coordinate and mobilise around peace⁴²⁶. Yet another research discovered that both print and digital media have positive and negative contributions to conflict resolution⁴²⁷. In summary, media in general, and social media in particular have both positive and negative roles it is playing in escalating or deescalating conflicting situations. This is the submission of a researcher⁴²⁸.

A scholar gave some advantages of social media in relation to conflict resolution²⁰⁹. Among them are:

- v. social media prevent possible physical combats during conflict resolution;

- vi. social media allow people to be bolder in expressing their grouse as social media reduce open confrontation;
- vii. social media are becoming more popular means of communication, though not necessarily the “best communicative means”;
- viii. the fact that people can conceal their real identity on social media makes social media means of expressing one’s opinions to the higher authorities without the fear of being known;
- ix. social media have turned many media stations from one-way communication channels to interactive channels where people can express their views about any conflict through the social media platforms of such media stations; and
- x. social media have become so exceptional as a place where people appear freer and settle the slightest conflict with their antagonists as fast as possible²⁰⁹.

A scholar also asserted,

Social media can facilitate a resilient people-centered approach to conflict prevention and enables people around the globe to share firsthand witness reports of violence, social unrest, human rights infringements, election fraud, and political instability, empowering them to become agents of change within their own communities⁴²⁹.

Two scholars have also written extensively on how to “use tactics of justification, consent, persuasion, switching attention, suggestion, jokes and postponement of conversation to finish conflict situations” through social media⁴¹⁹.

As part of the recommendations extracted from a recent conference, social media was recommended as “a space for dialogue”⁴³⁰. These recommendations were made:

1. When seeking to promote dialogue on social media, we need to focus on building bridges through compassion and peaceful communication.
2. Information, media literacy, ethics and critical thinking are prerequisites for responsible social media use.

3. Social media is just one tool in the communications toolbox. Therefore it is also important to network with other institutions with common areas of interest, including traditional media and education.
4. We should work to develop strategies to pressure online platforms to act in socially responsible ways.
5. Ignorance is the main cause of hate speech. It is caused by a lack of information, misinformation/disinformation, and cognitive dissonance
 - It is important to know the who, what, where and how of communication, including the issues at stake, the narratives addressing them, the influencers involved, and the channels and tools available for use.
6. We need to build credibility as voices of peace. One should listen before engaging, piggyback on multipliers, and then finally contribute with one's own message.
7. It is important to build capacity through the use of marketing skills, analytical tools, the engagement of creative communities, and the involvement of schools and universities⁴³⁰.

Social media is having negative effects on their users in general and conflict resolution and peace building in particular⁴³¹. The negative effects of social media on their users, especially youths, cannot be ignored. If not controlled, social media can have dangerous effects like:

1. Lack of control of and over personal information: Youths post private information online without realising the associated risks.
2. Cyber bullying
3. Mental Health issues
4. Lack of Morals
5. Spread and ability to amplify Fake News
6. Exposure to adult information
7. Indirect encouragement of high rate of scam on social media
8. Poor grades from the academic pursuits
9. Long hours on Social Media platforms
10. Peer pressure
11. Addiction to social media³²⁸.

Two scholars have discussed these social media menaces in Nigeria in details with specific examples²⁵⁹. Some of the particular ways in which social media negatively affect

conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria are fake news and hate speech. A researcher extensively explained the term hate speech. In his words,

Hate speech denotes any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action. Essentially, such speeches rob others of their dignity, including: (a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; (e) participation in organisations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination. Additionally, hate speech refers to all communications (whether verbal, written, symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons²⁸⁷.

As extensively defined by two researchers, fake news is

an information disorder with different formal characteristics and intentions: satire/parody (ridicule and irony content to criticize elements of society without the intention to harm), false connection (headlines, images, or captions do not confirm the content), misleading content (misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual), false context (genuine content shared with false contextual information), imposter content (when genuine sources are impersonated), manipulated content (genuine content manipulated), fabricated content (new content 100% false to deceive and to harm), clickbait (tabloid or misleading headlines), and propaganda (true or false information spread to persuade an audience with economic, political, religious, racist purposes among others)⁴³².

The fact that the reach and impacts of information spread are considerably intensified and happened at such a fast pace on social networking websites makes fake news and hate speech to get a remarkable possibility to cause great influences for countless users of social media within minutes⁴³³. Two scholars thought that “fake news and hate speech ... are gaining ground in the Nigerian polity, especially in the social media and broadcast media spheres”²⁹³. This is so “because of the de-centralised nature of the social media platform

[which] has become a perfect place for amateurs and professionals alike to create and share ideas, information, images, videos, art, [and] music”²⁸⁷. However, it has to be noted that the Federal Government of Nigeria has started a campaign against these social menaces²⁹³. A report specifically has it that “In August 2017, the Nigerian government announced the monitoring of social media to identify and deal with hate speech, anti-government and anti-security information”⁴³⁴.

Fake news is also referred to as “misinformation” and “disinformation”, “malinformation” or “various forms of harmful content”^{432, 435, 258}. It is regarded as “a global phenomenon”⁴²⁰. It is being encouraged on social media, especially on WhatsApp Messenger, because of the easy-to-read opportunities that many social media like the WhatsApp instant messaging service give in that “text, photos, memes, audio and video notes, files in different formats (Word, Excel, PDF), emoticons, stickers, GIFS, contact numbers, and even geolocation, or direct access to the camera of the mobile device from which it is used” can be easily manipulated on this social media⁴³².

Referred to as junk news by some researchers, fake news is also easily spread on Facebook because of the social media’s accessibility⁴³⁶. While some scholars thought that there seems to be no simple antidote to this information menace, to curb this menace, another scholar advised, “All social media users need to develop a healthy scepticism about the messages that they receive, learn to check sources and refine their skills of discernment”^{258, 437}. Another particular way that social media are having negative effects on conflict resolution and peacebuilding is that social media are making real-time friends less realistic as many social media users “are more concerned with Facebook friends, videos on YouTube, posts, tweets and other online communication than they are with face-to-face friends”⁴³⁸.

Cyberbullying (or digital bullying) mentioned above, as one of the “dangerous effects” of social media, is “an act of being mean to others by using information and

communication involving electronic technologies to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to an individual or group which can be done by an individual or group”⁴³⁹. Cyberbullying (also referred as “online harassment”) has been described as “purposefully abusive, unwanted, often repeated interactions with another person online”⁴⁴⁰. In the words of two scholars, “Cyberbullying can occur in different ways be it online harassment, posting offensive or abusive messages or pictures, privacy violations, and exclusion from online platforms/groups”⁴⁴¹. Cyberbullying is having negative effects on conflict resolution and peacebuilding as shown in a study that in spite of the fact that most people that use social media in Nigeria do so to “keep in touch with family and friends,” but many of them are ending up being cyberbullied⁴³⁹. A law was enacted in 2015 to combat this social menace ⁴⁴². Two scholars have also given some recommendations to curtail the menace⁴⁴³.

Moreover, if mishandled or not handled carefully, the Internet generally and social media specifically can expose users to great risks of disclosing private information. Some scholars corroborated this by noting that “information stored on cell phones, laptops and social media accounts can – if stolen, lost or inadvertently leaked – expose sensitive and extremely private information to large audiences”⁴⁴⁴. Thus, the watchword in using the Internet generally and social media specifically is carefulness. However, this information exposure may not be due to the carelessness of the users, but the “increasingly sophisticated methods of government censorship and surveillance” of the Internet and social media in some countries, thereby putting the Internet users at risk because data might be revealed that could compromise the safety of these users²²⁶. Other scholars reiterated this by concluding that,

... information credibility is essential if social media as a tool is to be effective in conflict prevention and peace building. The nature of social media which allows for anonymity of identity gives room for unverified information to be floated around the social media networks; this can be detrimental to the conflict prevention and peace building initiatives. There is therefore need for information verification and authentication by a trusted agent,

to offer information appertaining to violence, conflict prevention and peace building on the social media platforms²⁹⁶.

Some scholars have indicated that there is growing evidence that social media in particular and the Internet generally are influencing suicide-related behaviour both positively and negatively³⁰². These scholars gave many factors responsible for this. They later gave some remedies to the negative effect³⁰².

Some scholars have tagged social media “an information confrontation battlefield”³⁰². This is against the backdrop that social media could be a very useful means to support military operations. This has made some scholars to refer to social media as “a modern weapon”⁴⁴⁵. This “weaponization of social media, which means transforming social networks into a field of hostile information activities carried out on target audiences in the gray zone between peace and war”³⁰⁸. The weaponization is “from disinformation campaigns to electoral manipulation and online recruitment by violent extremist organizations, digital threats exacerbate conflict drivers, open new avenues for spoilers, and increase polarization, complicating efforts to prevent or counter violent conflict”⁴²⁵. Six ways of doing this has been identified thus: “intelligence collection, (geo-) targeting, cyber operations, command and control, defense, and psychological warfare (inform and influence)”³⁰⁸. Against this trend of the activities of “bad actors” on social media, a scholar gave some recommendations:

1. Be present on social media with attractive, well-tailored content.
2. Use what technology offers.
3. Advance your own narrative and develop attractive branding.
4. Build your brand and narrative advocacy.
5. Immunize your audience against psychological operations³⁰⁸.

2.1.4.9. Cyber Peace

Against the backdrop of many of these cyber vices in and through the cyberspace, many scholars and stakeholders in world peace and information communication technologies

have started arguments that brought about the concepts of “cyber security” and “cyber peace”. Notable among these stakeholders are the World Federation of Scientists, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and Suzanne Mubarak Women’s International Peace Movement (SMWIPM)⁴⁴⁶. Another organisation is the CyberPeace Foundation (CPF) of India that “is an award-winning civil society organization, think tank of CyberSecurity and policy experts with the vision of pioneering CyberPeace Initiatives to build collective resiliency against cybercrimes & global threats of cyber warfare”⁴⁴⁷. The most recent organisation, according to a scholar, is the Cyber Peace Institut which was founded in Geneva in September 2019⁴⁴⁸.

Of concern to this study is cyber peace. Since it is difficult to give a clear definition of peace as pointed out earlier, scholars have found it difficult also to give a precise definition of cyber peace. Instead, attempts are being made to describe it. As cited in an online source, cyber peace is “a universal order of cyberspace built on a wholesome state of tranquillity, the absence of disorder or disturbance and violence”⁴⁴⁹. While a scholar discussed extensively how cyber peace could be achieved globally, there have been some basic operational elements of cyber peace determined by the World Federation of Scientists in August 2019⁴⁵⁰,⁴⁴⁸. These elements are:

1. The free circulation of information and ideas guaranteed by international law to individuals also applies to cyberspace. Restrictions should be within the legal process and to the extent necessary.
2. All countries should work together to develop a common code of cyber conduct and a harmonized global legal framework, including provisions on judicial investigation cooperation that respects confidentiality and human rights.
3. All users, service providers, and governments should work to prevent the use of cyberspace, especially young and vulnerable users, in a way that could lead to violence or exploitation.
4. The private sector, including governments, organizations, and individuals, should implement and maintain comprehensive security programs that leverage privacy and security technologies based on internationally accepted best practices and standards.

5. Software and hardware developers should strive to improve resilience and develop secure technologies that are resistant to vulnerabilities.
6. Governments should actively participate in the efforts of the United Nations to support global cybersecurity and cyber peace, as well as prevent the use of cyberspace for conflict⁴⁴⁸.

2.1.5. Nigerian Baptist Convention: History, Vision and Operations

2.1.5.1. History of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is a body of “Christians and churches of the Baptist faith that have willingly come together with the purpose of propagating the gospel under the cooperative spirit, bound together with common articles of faith within Nigeria and beyond”⁴⁵¹. The Convention is a registered faith-based organization with the Cooperate Affairs Commission in Nigeria⁴⁵².

Rev. Thomas Jefferson Bowen, who used to be “a frontiersman who had fought in the Texas Revolution of the 1830s” before becoming a missionary of Southern Baptist Convention of America (SBC)⁴⁵³. Bowen began Baptist work in Nigeria with his arrival in Badagry, Nigeria, on the 5th of August 1850⁴⁵⁴. Bowen later settled in Ijaye-Orile, a town near Ibadan¹⁵⁰. A historian chronicled, “the story of Baptist beginnings in Nigeria must be understood in the context of SBC missionary involvement in the West African sub-region...in 1845. The SBC report about Nigeria indicated that ‘it was in dire need of Christian mission work, and that it held great promise for such’”⁴⁵⁵. In spite of intra and inter-tribal wars, Baptist work spread in southwest Nigeria after that with other missionaries like Mr Philips, SY Trimble, JH Cason, RW Priest and William Clarke with their wives joining Bowen at Ogbomoso⁴⁵⁶. Also, Moses Ladejo Stone, a native, joined the missionaries and became the first native ordained pastor whose “ministry was very successful, and the church witnessed a spiritual and numerical growth”⁴⁵⁷. As noted by a theologian, the Baptist work, in

particular, and Christianity in general, spread to the northern part of Nigeria through the Yoruba traders and civil servants who settled in many parts of the area⁴⁵⁸.

As a faith-based organisation, the Nigerian Baptist Convention officially started as Yoruba Baptist Association on March 11, 1914, at First Baptist Church, Idikan, Ibadan, under the leadership of late Reverend Mojola Agbebi⁴⁵⁹. Fifty-three representatives from twenty-four churches attended this meeting with a resolution to draft a constitution and select officers to manage the new association and challenges in areas of evangelism and church growth⁴⁶⁰. The emergence of this association resulted from efforts to resolve various conflicts among the white missionaries and the indigenous members⁴⁶¹. The name Yoruba Baptist Association was changed to the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1919 to reflect the national outlook of the organization⁴⁶¹.

A researcher asserted that the Nigerian Baptist Convention is currently

... completely self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting. It has also started other international conventions in West Africa such as The Baptist Convention of Ghana and The Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone. Other African countries where the convention has established missions include Cote d' Ivoire, Mali, Mozambique, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso⁴⁶².

There are thousands of Baptist schools, hospitals and other establishments with the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso (one of the leading evangelical theological seminaries in Africa) and Bowen University (the first and only Baptist university in Africa) in the forefront. Baptist work is expanding daily in Nigeria and beyond in Africa.

There are no accurate records of the number of members of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Still, a source claimed that "there are roughly 14 million Baptists in Nigeria, most of whom are affiliated with churches under the [Convention]"⁴⁶³. As at the annual session of the Convention held virtually in August 2020, there are thirty-five conferences⁴⁶⁴.

2.1.5.2. Vision and Mission of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The Vision of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is “To be a foremost Christ-like missionary organization in Nigeria, Africa and the whole world”⁴⁶⁵. The Mission of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is “To be a community of believers that represent Christ by proclaiming the gospel, discipling believers, caring and developing Churches to be involved in holistic ministries – evangelistic, social and healing – and collaborating with other Christian agencies across the globe”⁴⁶⁵.

In order to attain these vision and mission and be fully involved in impacting the lives of the people not just spiritually but economically, socially and politically, a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the name Ecumenism for Development and Peace Initiative (EDAPI) was established and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria in 2017⁴⁶⁶. The objectives of this NGO are to:

1. Sensitize and equip the grassroots religious actors towards achieving peace and developments.
2. Mobilise and create strategic drive to strengthen alliance against violence extremism across age groups; youths in particular and community/religious leaders as a whole.
3. Facilitate peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationship through synergy and dialogue.
4. Strengthen and assist the needy and less privileged in our society.
5. Network with and to cooperate with other development partners in order to engender sustainable development⁴⁶⁶.

2.1.5.3. Operations and Organizational Structure of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The Nigerian Baptist Convention operates from its headquarters in the Baptist Building, Obafemi Awolowo Road, Oke Bola, Ibadan (the foundation laying of the building was done on February 23, 1954 by Rev. Dr. George W. Sadler, the then Secretary for Africa, Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, US⁴⁶¹). It operates through

officers, annual sessions, boards, committees, conferences, associations, churches, and other institutions like a university (the Bowen University, Iwo), theological institutions, medical institutions, missions (secondary) schools and a printing press, bookstores, a satellite television station, and others. All these boards, committees and officers have to report to the National Convention during the annual sessions that has final authority concerning all matters relating to the Convention. Churches sponsor messengers to the Annual Session. Individual members of churches can attend on their own provided they are fully registered during the Annual Session. The Nigerian Baptist Convention also has registered trustees that consist of “the Chairman, the President, the Vice President (Finance and Investments), and a representative each from the three zones of the Convention and representative each of Men’s Missionary Union, Women’s Missionary Union, Youth and the Legal Adviser”⁴⁶⁷.

A president who is also the organisation's chief executive officer leads the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Starting from the 2012 Convention in session, the ceremonial head of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, formerly called the ‘President’, has changed to the ‘Chairman,’ while the nomenclature for the executive/administrative head changed from ‘General Secretary’ to ‘President’⁴⁶⁸. Rev. Dr Supo Ayokunle, who is the current President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), used to be the President of the Convention till May 2021. The current President is Rev. Dr Israel Adelani Akanji⁴⁶⁹. The convention chairman, who presides over meetings, supports him. Three vice presidents with each in charge of ministerial matters, administration and human resources, and finance and investment assist the Convention President. The Convention has various ministries that are under the leadership of directors. Some of the ministries are Christian Education, Medical Services, Youth and Students Ministries, Publications, Social Ministry and Global Missions¹⁵⁰. Each of these ministries has various divisions or units through which the ministry functions⁴⁷⁰.

There is a need to clarify some bodies/institutions through which the Convention operates in relation to this research. These bodies are:

1. Church: a local Baptist church is a “group of baptized (baptism by immersion) believers who have covenanted to worship, fellowship, teach and evangelize, and cooperate with the Nigerian Baptist Convention with the sole aim of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ.” As a cooperating member of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, each Baptist church in Nigeria operates a “congregational system of church polity” under the leadership of a trained pastor or (in his/her absence) a church leader⁴⁵². There are currently 18,135 of such local churches⁴⁷¹.
2. Association: “a Baptist association is a group of Baptist churches that are geographically contiguous with at least five Baptist trained pastors out of which three must be full time, and two of whom must be ordained.” It is the closest to the local church. It meets quarterly for brotherly fellowship and administrative enhancement. A moderator and other officers usually lead it. The Nigerian Baptist Convention currently has 532 associations³⁷¹.
3. Conference: a conference, “a miniature version of the Convention”, is an ecclesiological body (or diocese) in a geographical area or state⁴⁷². A conference consists of “at least six Baptist associations with not less than eighteen full-time Baptist trained pastors of whom at least twelve shall be ordained.” There are 35 such bodies currently in the Nigerian Baptist Convention⁴⁷¹.
4. The Ministerial Board: this board (established around 1960) consists of the Convention Chairman, the President, the Vice President (Ministerial), a representative of the Theological Education Council, Chairman of Pastors’ Fellowship, representative of the Legal Unit and seven elected members⁴⁷³. These seven elected members consist of two pastors, a lawyer and at least two women, one of whom shall

be the WMU Executive Director. In addition, any person whose services may be required can be co-opted from time to time for specific agenda items. Each conference and association is expected to have a similar body known as a sub-ministerial board. Duties of Ministerial Board among other things include fostering peaceful relationships between churches and pastors and serving as arbitrator in disputes involving pastors, churches, associations, conferences within the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Figure 2.11 gives the graphic representation of the newly proposed organogram of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

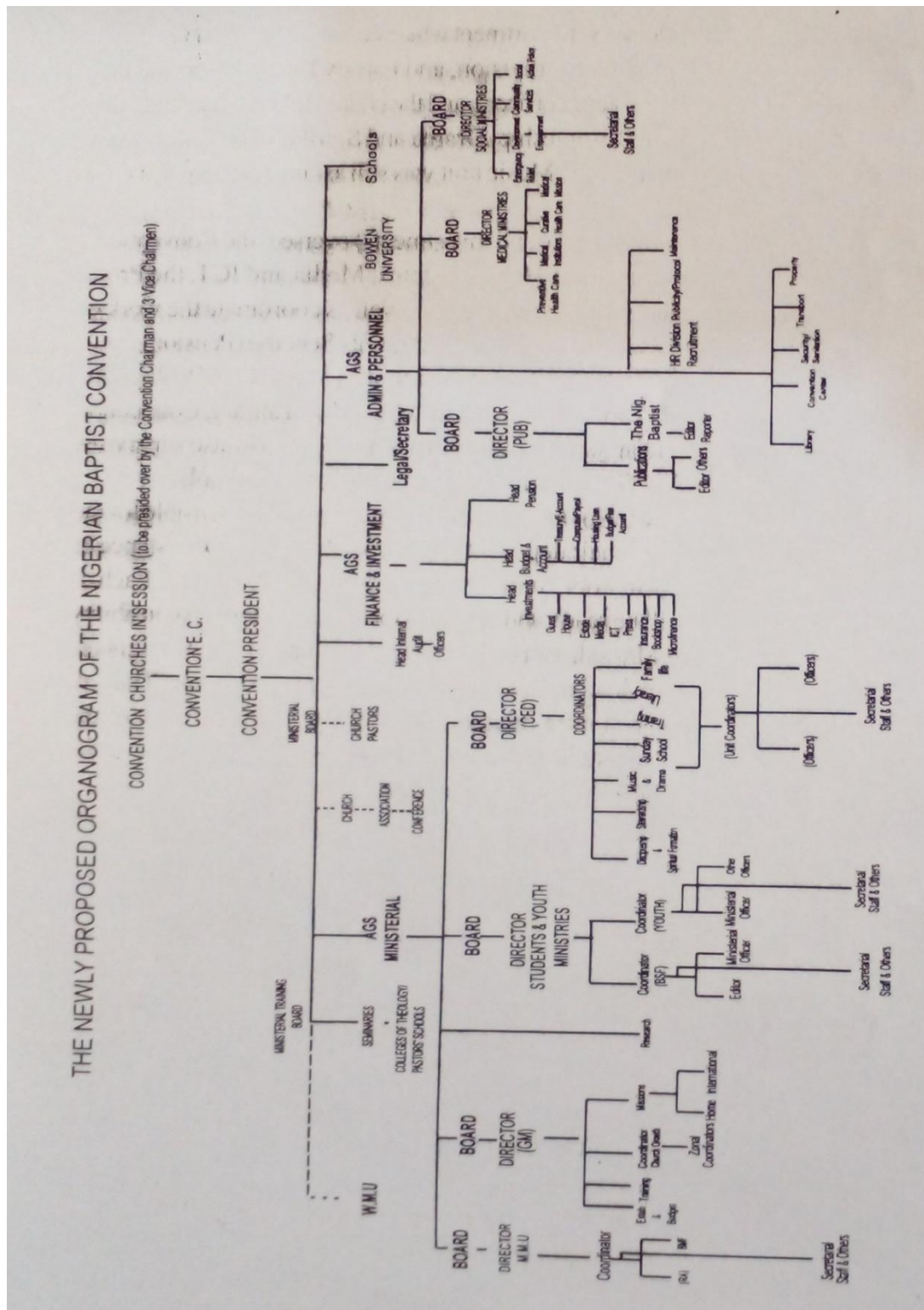


Figure 2.11: The Newly Proposed Organogram of the Nigerian Baptist Convention⁴⁷⁴

In relation to conflict resolution, the Nigerian Baptist Convention has this procedure among other things in its constitution:

- (a) In the event of any crisis or dispute arising in any church co-operating with the Convention or any institution belonging to the Convention, such crisis or dispute shall be settled in the Biblical ways of settling disputes i.e. within the local church, failing which to the association, the conference, the Executive Committee of the Convention and finally the Annual Session.
- (b) The Convention in session, if need be, shall set up an Ad-Hoc Peace Committee who will report to the Annual Session through the Executive Committee.
- (c) No Conference, Association, Church or individual shall challenge the final decision of the Annual Session in any court of law directly or indirectly. The decision of the Annual Session shall be final and binding on all concerned.
- (d) Any violation of the foregoing section (c) shall result in automatic deprivation of fellowship with the Convention.
- (e) The Convention shall withdraw fellowship from any Church that refuses to accept settlement decided by the Convention. Such withdrawal of fellowship shall be done after it has been considered and recommended by the Executive Committee to the Annual Session.

Where the truth is established that the Pastor or the head of an institution is the root cause of the problem, the President shall suspend such individual from the services of the Convention until the case is finally disposed off.

Where there is serious crisis, arising in a Church as a result of:

- (a) A member or some members who sit tight in a committee or office, as to make progress or development impossible in the Church.
- (b) Stewardship of Account which ought to have been rendered, is deliberately withheld by the officer's who ought to give such account so as to conceal misappropriation of funds.
- (c) A situation arising from a handful of members to have overall control of decision making outside the machinery of the Executive Committee and Church-in-Conference.
- (d) In such other cases where the Church-in-Conference sees it appropriate to disfellowship such a member or group of members.

Then the Church shall be free to disfellowship from such an erring member or group of members.

Where a Church refuses to discipline the member or members the Convention shall withdraw fellowship from that Church. Once the Convention withdraws fellowship from a Church, any member of that Church who holds office at Associational, Conference and

Convention levels, shall automatically forfeit his office unless he/she transfers his membership to another Church co-operating with the Convention.

The erring Conference, Association, Church or individual shall not be re-admitted into the fold of the Convention until such Conference, Association, Church or individual has purged itself of the offence, repented and applied for re-admission through the order set out in section (b) of this article, and the Convention Executive Committee is so satisfied of the willingness to abide by the Constitution and Regulations of the Convention⁴⁶⁴.

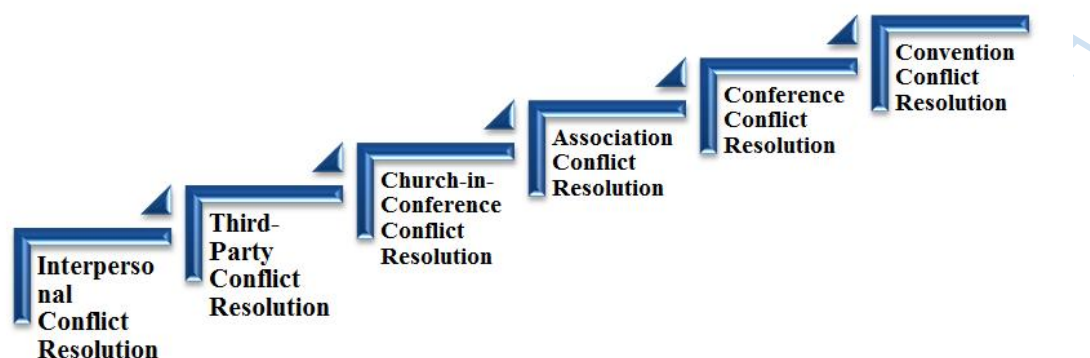


Figure 2.12: Steps of Conflict Resolution in the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

Figure 2.12 above gives a pictorial representation of conflict resolution steps in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. This is as explained in the constitution of the Convention quoted above based on some biblical injunctions.

A researcher referred to the “church covenant” that the Nigerian Baptist Convention recommends for every church that cooperates with it to be read by every church member occasionally to pledge their allegiance to some biblical injunctions as believed by the Baptist⁴⁵¹. In the words of this researcher, “Among other things, the vow to live together mutually and settle their conflict amicably is entrenched in the covenant which both the pastor and the parishioners recite before official induction of a pastor on a church”⁴⁵¹. The relevant part of the church covenant reads thus: “To be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay”⁴⁷⁵.

2.1.5.4. Nigerian Baptist Church Pastor

Against the backdrop of the fact this study is mainly about the church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention are making use of the social media to resolve conflicts in their churches, it is expedient to discuss briefly who a Baptist pastor is and his or her roles in the church. A Nigerian Baptist pastor is a person who is called, theologically trained (and possibly ordained) to lead a local Baptist church⁴⁷⁶. The pastor is one of the “regular officers of a church”⁴⁷⁷. Other recognized officers are deacons, missionaries, evangelists, and teachers of the Bible⁴⁷⁷. In the words of a scholar, “The terms, ‘pastor,’ ‘elder,’ and ‘bishop,’ or ‘overseer’— all refer to the same office”³⁹⁹. This is confirmed in the way Paul addressed the same set of people in Ephesus when Paul used the terms “elder (older), pastor (shepherd), and overseer (bishop)” to refer to the same group of people⁴⁷⁶.

In the Nigerian Baptist setting, as it is obtainable in many other Baptist settings in other parts of the world, a woman can also be called, theologically trained, and ordained as a Baptist pastor. However, calling them to lead a local Baptist church has been rare. A scholar confirmed this in a study⁴⁷⁸.

As called and theologically trained people, church pastors are expected to do many responsibilities known as pastoral functions. Amongst these functions are to lead worship services, preach, administer the ordinances, minister to groups and individuals, and represent the congregation for the church and the world⁴¹¹. In addition, “prayer mediation” has also been identified by a researcher as one of the “many different activities of pastoral work”⁴⁷⁹. As stated in the guideline on policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, some of the leadership roles of a local Baptist church pastor are as follows:

1. He leads the church in the proclamation of the gospel in the church and the community.

2. He cares for persons and leads church to care for church members and the Community.
3. He provides administrative leadership to guide the church in the attainment of its divine missions.
4. He leads in congregational and other worship services such as: the Lord's Supper and baptismal services.
5. He conducts wedding ceremonies and funeral services.
6. He works closely with the deacons in their training and performance in their work of caring and building up of the church membership/fellowship.
7. He serves as chairman of the church council and church conference, and provides administrative leadership for the entire program of the church.
8. He supervises church staff members according to their job description, and provides for staff training on the job.
9. In a multi-staff setting, he coordinates the work of other ministers in the church as the minister of preaching. Such other ministers may include: Minister of Education; Minister of Music; Minister of Evangelism/Outreach; Minister of Youth/Teenagers, etc⁴⁷⁷.

2.1.6. Mediation and the Nigerian Baptist Convention

2.16.1. Theological Basis for Conflict Resolution

Although discussion on the role of theology in peacebuilding and conflict resolution “appears to be in its initial stages” yet, it is expedient to review the theological basis for conflict resolution⁴⁸⁰. The Bible offers very modest yet formidable procedures for resolving conflict. These procedures are fair that they “can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life,” and the procedures are so formidable that they can be “used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar/shillings business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases”⁴⁸¹.

Conflict started in the Bible when the serpent assumed to be the devil came to deceive the first human beings on earth – Adam and Eve – in the Garden of Even (Genesis 3). This has made a scholar believe that “conflict comes into the society due to misunderstanding,

communicating gap, injustice, and power imbalance, clash of interest or values, and intolerance”⁵. The occurrence in the Garden of Eden broke the relationship of God with people. It resulted in breaking the relationships between people and between people and the environment. God swung into action immediately to resolve the conflict by firstly interrogating Adam and Eve. God gave immediate punishment. However, God made a way of reconciliation for humankind. The rest of the Bible is how God worked (and is still working) out this reconciliation⁴⁸².

It is believed that hostilities should be relatively rare occurrences in the lives of practitioners or adherents of religious beliefs because as imitators of God, we are to “strive for peace with all men and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14) and “...pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding” (Romans 14:19). It is irreligious and a sign of spiritual weakness and impatience to go around antagonizing too much and/or ceaselessly⁴⁸³.

Jesus Christ has been identified as “an icon of ... peaceful humanity” that Christians have to emulate because “he did not strike back; he did not kill; he did not incite violence upon others; he did not manipulate others for political control”⁴⁸⁴. Jesus Christ was prophetically referred at the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6. This peace is associated “with the gift of the Spirit from above” for “...the fruit of the Spirit is...peace...” (Galatians 5:22)⁴⁸⁴. Based on this assumption, this researcher agrees with a scholar that thought that “in Christian's view, peace is always connected with love and justice and includes inner or spiritual dimension” and that there can never be peace where justice is absent because “peace and justice must be built on the concept of human person and human rights”⁴⁸⁵.

2.1.6.1.1. Biblical Foundations of Conflict Resolution

A scholar has asserted that “conflict cannot be avoided”⁴⁸⁶. Nevertheless, the Bible suggests some ways to avoid conflicts and live peacefully with other people. A theologian summarized these ways into three principles with some explanations. The theologian postulated that God has: 1) called people to pursue peace in all their relationships; 2) taught people how to view conflicts; and 3) directed people how to resolve conflicts⁴⁸⁷. Nevertheless, some of these ways are elaborated below.

One of the ways is in the ways one uses one’s words. One who would avoid conflicts and live peacefully with other people would care about what the person says and how the person says it. It does not matter “whether it is the words of relationships, words of eloquence, words of sarcasm, words of story, or words of song—all of these have to do with who we are and how we speak”⁴⁸⁸. The Book of Proverbs particularly in the Holy Bible provides many samples of biblical passages about the use of words (see Proverbs 10:32; 11:9; 12:18; 13:3; 14:3, 25; 15:1, 4; 16:21, 24; 18:4, 20; 20:15; 25:18).

Another way to avoid conflicts and live peacefully with other people is forgiveness. Being a broad theme, a researcher has viewed the concept of forgiveness from many “several psychological, sociopolitical, and ...theological insights”⁷⁰. These insights are a review of what some reputed experts have said about forgiveness which is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, a theologian thought that “forgiveness is one of the most difficult virtues and/or qualities to cultivate by an average human being”⁴⁸⁹. Forgiveness does not essentially mean that the offender is not guilty of whatever the offending person did to upset the offended person. It does not mean forgetting either. Furthermore, forgiveness does not mean that one is approving, aiding or abating the wrong doing⁴⁸⁹. Instead, forgiveness means letting go of the pain the incident is causing the offended person. It has been defined as a “willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behavior

toward one who unjustly hurt us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love towards him or her”⁴⁹⁰.

Forgiveness has been seen as a religious virtue and central issue in Christian theology and peacebuilding⁴⁹¹. There can be no conflict resolution if there is no spirit of forgiveness in a relationship. If a matter or case is settled, the case is closed and must stay closed. Some of the biblical verses that support forgiveness are Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3-4; Colossians 3:13⁴⁹¹. A theologian opined that forgiveness is more of God than man⁴⁵⁸. The theologian went further: “God is involved [in forgiveness] and He is actually the one who forgives. Man forgives only because God forgives and he should do so as God does it: echoing God’s forgiveness”⁴⁵⁸.

As a fundamental element within the Christian belief, forgiveness encompasses a confession of sin, repentance of wrongdoing, and reflection of God's unconditional and absolute love⁴⁹⁰. Compare Romans 4:7-8 and 12:19-21:

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.... Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Corroborating these biblical injunctions, a renowned theologian and peacebuilder believed that without forgiveness, then there is no future⁴⁹². The theologian said,

...forgiveness is like abandoning my right to revenge or to pay back. By the fact that you have abused me, wronged and hurt me, you have given me a certain right over you that I could refuse to forgive you. When I forgive you, I say jettison meaning that I open the door of opportunity to you to make a new beginning⁴⁹².

Furthermore, to avoid conflicts and live peacefully with other people, one must be ready to reconcile with people who offended one or are at loggerhead with one. In the opinion of a theologian, “reconciliation entails restitution, restoration and re-establishment of

friendship or peace after a crisis, clash and/or quarrel”⁴⁸⁹. Having given some biblical explanations of the relationships between reconciliation and forgiveness, this theologian went on to conclude that “in reconciliation, forgiveness on the part of the injured party and repentance on the part of the wrongdoer or offender, are necessary and basic”⁴⁸⁹.

A researcher emphasized that reconciliation is “... an active call for all Christians to seek reconciliation within the storm of conflict”⁴⁹³. Another scholar defined reconciliation as “the process of moving toward a relatively cooperative and amicable relationship, typically established after a rupture in relations involving extreme injury to one or more sides in the relationship”⁴⁹⁴. In the words of other researchers, “reconciliation entails rebuilding of relationships that are not based on past conflicts, but require novel forms of interactions which emerge in a post-conflict setting”⁴⁹⁵. A group has asserted that “reconciliation and peacemaking lie at the heart of Christian life and worship”⁴⁹⁶. So, every Christian is expected to make peace quickly with any conflicting party. This is instructed in these biblical verses: Matthew 5:23-25; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14.

An outstanding biblical basis for reconciliation is 2 Corinthians 5:18-20:

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.

This passage is in the context of a more significant and more critical reconciliation between mankind and God, which is “connected to God’s work of reconciliation through Jesus Christ”⁴⁹⁷. Commenting on the passage, a researcher opined that having been reconciled with God in regeneration in Jesus Christ, as evident in the preceding verse, every Christian should join God in the ministry of reconciliation by bringing other people – “the world” – to God.

This can be accomplished as ambassadors for Christ in the lifestyles of Christians wherever they find themselves⁴⁹⁸.

Another scholar clarified that reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal in dimensions⁴⁹⁹. In its vertical dimension, reconciliation is religious or theological because it mends the relationship between human beings and God. Its horizontal dimension refers “to the mandate of those who are reconciled to God to seek to reconcile with other human beings, as well as to share the message of reconciliation”⁴⁹⁹. This scholar went on to add that reconciliation means “taking seriously the orientation of the other and placing this orientation in meaningful dialogue with one’s own”⁴⁹⁹.

Based on this passage and from the Christian point of view, a researcher discoursed three main points in reconciliation⁴⁹¹. The first point is that God is the principal Author of reconciliation, while human beings join God in the work of reconciliation. The second point is that God starts with the victims in reconciliation before turning to the oppressor. The third point is that in reconciliation, God makes a new creation out of the history of the victims and the oppressor⁴⁹¹.

Another very prominent theme in the Holy Bible relating to conflict resolution and peacebuilding is love. The Bible, in its entity, emphasizes love. “In Christianity, the motivation and the purpose of our lives should be loving God and our neighbours. It involves a lifelong commitment to walk in Jesus’ footsteps”⁵⁰⁰. Jesus Christ summed up God’s law in a twofold command: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). In fact, “...love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10).

To grasp its importance to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, one needs to understand what love really means in the Bible. There may be only one word used for love in the English language. However, there are at least four different words and meanings for love in Greek, one of the original languages used to write the Bible⁵⁰¹. These words and their meanings are:

1. *Eros*: This is defined as sexual attraction or sexual love. God ordained that kind of love when God said in Genesis 2:24, "...a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." The book in the Bible entitled Song of Solomon is about sexual love that God has restricted to the marriage relationship. The other kinds of love, God says, are free to be used by all mankind, but *eros* is limited to the marriage relationship⁵⁰².
2. *Storge*: This is a natural affection or natural obligation. It is a natural movement of the soul for husband, wife, child or even dog. It is a quiet, abiding feeling within a man that rests on something close to the man and feels good about⁵⁰³. Biblical passages for this are Romans 1:31; 12:10; and 2 Timothy 3:3.
3. *Phileo*: This is a companionable love. It speaks of affection, fondness, or liking. It is a love that responds to kindness or appreciation. It involves giving and receiving, but when it is greatly strained, it can collapse in a crisis. It is a higher love than *eros* because it is our happiness rather than my happiness. This love is called out of one's heart by qualities in another⁵⁰⁴. Biblical passage for this are Matthew 6:5; 10:37; 23:6; 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 20:46; 22:47; John 5:20; 11:3, 36; 12:25; 15:19; 16:27; 20:2; 21:15-17; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Titus 3:15; Rev. 3:19; 22:15.
4. *Agape*: this is called out of one's heart by the preciousness of the object loved. It is a love of esteem, of evaluation. It has the idea of prizing. It is not kindled by the merit or worth of its object, but it originates in its own God-given nature. It delights in

giving. It keeps on loving even when the loved one is unresponsive, unkind, unlovable, and unworthy. It is unconditional love. It desires only the good of the one loved. It is a consuming passion for the well-being of others⁵⁰⁵. Biblical passages for this are John 3:16; 3:35; 13:34; 14:15; 15:9; 15:13; Romans 5:5; 13:8-10; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 3:17; 4:2; 4:15; 5:2, 25; Colossians 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9-10; 1 Peter 4:8.

One biblical passage that discusses more on the love of God to humankind which humankind should reciprocate to God and other people as a way of avoiding conflict and promoting peace is found in 1 John 4. A researcher did an explanation of this passage⁵⁰⁶. The central part of this passage examines how the children of God had and can have “lived faith experiences” of the “love of God” that this researcher termed a “spirituality of love”⁵⁰⁶. The researcher went on to explain the description of the character of God whom “no one has seen” (compare 4:12, 20) as “love” or “*agape*” (see 4:8, 16) or rather, the source of love demonstrates love by loving humankind (compare Psalm 145:9, 13; Matthew 5:44-48; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19). It is expected, therefore, that humankind should love one another as that would be proof that God (who is love) lives in humankind and the love of God “...has been perfected in [humankind]” (1 John 4:12). Anyone who does not love cannot claim to know God (compare 1 John 4:8). Although, God cannot be seen, God can be known through love for fellow humans. Hating other people is a sign that one does not love God because “...he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:21)⁵⁰⁶.

Furthermore, Christians must love their enemies because God loves everyone, including those who do not deserve it. Loving enemies implies forgiving them. Jesus Christ did not only teach this (see Matthew 5:38-45; Luke 6:27-36), but demonstrated this when Jesus Christ prayed for those that crucified Jesus Christ and others that were making jest of Jesus Christ when Jesus Christ was on the cross (see Luke 23:34)⁵⁰⁷. The apostles advanced

this positive relationship with enemies by similar teachings (compare Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:9). It is noted that the church fathers in the early church also propagated and practised this principle of loving and praying for enemies⁵⁰⁷.

Closely related to the issues of forgiveness and reconciliation is the process of resolving conflict amicably, as Jesus Christ highlighted it in Matthew 18:15-19. In fact, this passage is an excellent biblical passage on resolving conflict. A theologian did a study of this passage in relation to conflict resolution, and another theologian went further to give some literary context, socio-historical context, analysis of, and theological interpretations or hermeneutical implications of the passage^{508, 509}. The context of this passage, which is a parable of Jesus Christ, is forgiving fellow human beings⁵¹⁰. In the context, Jesus Christ focused the attention of His audience “away from themselves and personal glory, to humility, to a concern for the little ones of the kingdom, to hatred of sin, and to reconciliation and forgiveness”⁵⁰⁸.

Based on this passage, the theologian explained three steps that one has to take in resolving conflicts with a fellow human being⁵⁰⁸. Step One has to do with a deliberate attempt of reconciliation when a fellow believer sins against one. Emphases on fellow believers and sin are made here. Although a person is sinned against, it is the offended person that is recommended to go to the offender and speak directly to the offender approaching the offender in love and humility as a doctor would treat a sick person. The reason, as the theologian put it, is “because Christian love always regards the welfare of a brother as more important than oneself”⁵⁰⁸. The approach should not be a confrontation, but one that would convince the offended person that the offender has done something wrong. It should be an interpersonal matter without involving any third party. On the word of the theologian, this is: to protect the reputation of the erring person; to protect one’s own reputation; and to preserve the peace of the church; to keep sins private and deal it with immediately in order not to bring

reproach on the name of Jesus Christ. The goal of this step is reconciliation. Step Two has to do with the provision of a witness if Step One fails. This serves many purposes: to increase cordial influence against the erring person; to increase the gravity of the situation; and to provide evidence to “the church court”⁵⁰⁸. If this second step also fails, then Step Three should be explored. Step Three has to do with informing the church leadership about the situation. This presupposes that every believer is a member of a local church and is under the authority of the church's leadership. The theologian opined, “This third step involves more solemnity, persuasion and authority than the second step”⁵⁰⁸. Since the church leadership is respected to be well trained in the Bible and matters of the church and supposedly experienced people on such issues, it should not be difficult for them to resolve the conflict. However, suppose the offender still refuses to apologize and allow reconciliation. In that case, the church will excommunicate the offender and regard the offender as an unbeliever. This ex-communication functions in three basic ways: it is a drastic measure to make the unrepentant sinner repent; it is a means to sanitize the church, to consecrate it and protect it from evil and heresy; and it is an open caution to others, to impart assiduousness to the means of grace and the fear of God⁵⁰⁸.

Drawing some inferences from the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33:1-12, a theologian gave some implications for interpersonal conflict resolution and reconciliation. The theologian opined that it is preferable to use non-violence/peaceful methods in settling disputes because conflicts are inevitable in the society; temporary emotions like anger, sadness, and hate that come from offences from other people should not be allowed to permanent unhealthy resolutions that one may end up regretting for the rest of one's life; anger, hostility, hatred and bitterness that are would-be facilitators of violence should not be permitted to turn to violent conducts, but rather, love, forgiveness and

reconciliation should be allowed to thrive; and peacemaking or making peace is what everyone should be committed to⁴⁸⁹.

In his contribution to how Christians can contribute to peacemaking, a researcher thought that because the Bible calls Christians the salt of the earth (see Matthew 5:13) and light of the world (see Matthew 5:14), “Christians have been given the responsibility to impact peace into their world by being the salt (solution), and the light (direction) of [the society] (Matt 5:13, 16)”⁵¹¹. This researcher has earlier argued that the solution to bitterness caused by conflicts should be the introduction of the sweetness of salt of Christians. At the same time, the light of Christians should brighten the shady situation caused by conflicts that needs light. In other words, Christians should have and/or make positive impacts of peace on their society⁵¹¹.

Another researcher highlighted “six valuable lessons on conflict resolution” that can be gleaned from resolving conflict recorded in Acts 15⁴⁸¹. These lessons are:

- 1) hearing both sides of the story (verses 2-5);
- 2) engaging in discussion (verses 6-7);
- 3) presenting the facts and being sensitive to What God is doing (verses 7-11);
- 4) providing supporting evidence (verses 12-18);
- 5) articulating a responsible solution to the conflict based on facts (verses 19-21); and
- 6) putting together a communication strategy that brings clarification⁴⁸¹.

In explaining 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, where Apostle Paul admonished against taking legal actions on conflicting issues among Christians, a scholar argued,

God understood the perils of the secular legal system. He warned of the risks of submitting a dispute between believers to the secular Court. And he called believers to something different. We are held to a different standard in how we live and love others. Why then would we resolve disputes according to a worldly standard? While the secular legal process may be necessary to obtain a full resolution of some kinds of disputes (i.e.,

divorce), Christians can still obtain resolutions to their conflicts in a way that glorifies God, honors one another, and restores peace⁵¹².

Christian bases for education for peace are highlighted in a publication⁵¹³. Among these bases are:

- i. the link between Jesus Christ and peace stands at the heart of Christian faith (compare Ephesians 2:14);
- ii. as beneficiaries of Christ's gift of peace, His disciples are called to be artisans of peace (compare Matthew 26:52; Luke 9:54-55; 10:5);
- iii. peace is intrinsically linked to righteousness and justice (see Psalm 85:10);
- iv. peace brings out the fundamental links between sin, forgiveness, and reconciliation (compare Ephesians 2:14-18);
- v. Christian faith affirms the need to honour as well as heal past memories, when necessary, through forgiveness; and
- vi. Christian faith in the Triune God teaches that the divine persons are really distinct from, yet related to, one another. This can inspire peacebuilding in a multi-religious world⁵¹³.

A scholar approached the theological basis for peace and conflict resolution from a different angle in an overview of four traditions on war and peace in Christian history⁵¹⁴. These traditions are "Pacifism, Just War, Total War, and World Community"⁵¹⁴. Each of these traditions has effects on conflict resolution and peacebuilding⁵¹⁵.

Pacifists believe that the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ are those of peace and that "... Christians are called to a higher standard with dealing with human conflict that is based on love and forgiveness" (compare Matthew 4:23; 5:9, 23-24, 38-44; Ephesians 6:10-17)⁵¹⁴. A just war simply "deals with the justification of how and why wars are fought"⁵¹⁶. While the Bible allows for violence, it, nonetheless, limits what may be done to an opponent

(see Deuteronomy 20:10-14; 2 Kings 6:20-23; 2 Chronicles 28:5-15). The scholar cited some biblical passages that supporters for the Just War in Christianity would cite to support their belief that Jesus would support Just War. These passages are Matthew 8:5-6; 10:34; 21:12; Mark 12:17; Luke 22:36; John 15:13; and Romans 13:1, although “each of these passages must be interpreted in the historical and cultural context in which they were written”⁵¹⁴.

Furthermore, the scholar described Total War as a noble and glorious war and victory in battle, which requires the annihilation of the enemy’s civilian population. It also holds that war is normal in human affairs and efforts and that peace is a sign of weakness and betrayal⁵¹⁴. Although biblical passages in support of this are found mostly in the Old Testament like Deuteronomy 20:10-18 and Joshua 8:24-28, “Total War advocates use many of the same texts that were mentioned in the Just War discussion” especially Revelation 6 and 20⁵¹⁴. Lastly, “World Community” whose “advocates believe that it is merely a matter of time before the over 200 nation states in the world join a Global Union that will be governed by a World Charter (Constitution)”⁵¹⁴. Biblical passages supposedly in support of this are Isaiah 2:2-4, Luke 4:18-19 and Matthew 26:19. The scholar concluded his discussion on these four traditions with these words: “All of these approaches, except Total War, that are shared by secular philosophies and other religious traditions are an excellent basis for dialogue and joint action for peace and justice in the world”⁵¹⁴.

2.1.6.2. Nexus between Theology, Mediative Dialogue and Conflict Resolution

Baptists, in particular, believe that Jesus Christ is the only divinely appointed Mediator between God and man⁵¹⁷. A researcher opined that Jesus Christ is “the peacemaker *par excellence* between earth and heaven”⁴⁹¹. Baptists believe that having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. Jesus Christ was buried, rose again on the third day, and

ascended to His Father, at whose right hand, Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for His people. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, King, the Head of the Church, and Jesus Christ is coming again to receive His faithful followers to reign with Him (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)⁵¹⁸.

Christians, who are literally “little Christs”, are to be like Jesus Christ. They are to resemble Jesus Christ in mediating between man and God and between man and other human beings. Moreover, it is believed that peacemakers (another word for mediators) are children of God (see Mathew 5:9). Thus, every Christian is expected to mediate between two or more conflicting parties by communicating separately with each party through fruitful discussion and negotiation of the contending issue to make the disagreeing parties reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

2.1.6.3. Nigerian Baptist Convention and Conflict Resolution

It has been affirmed that the “Nigerian Baptist Convention in general and its local churches, in particular, have experienced different forms of conflicts. From the early history of the Convention, dispute has been a recurring issue”⁴⁵¹. This has made the Convention have procedures for settling conflicts⁴⁶. The Convention recently produced a document that “clearly state procedures to follow in the discipline of an erring church or pastor and the disciplinary measure to be taken”⁵¹⁹.

Four out of the many beliefs and practices of the Baptists that are distinct to them are likely influencing how the Nigerian Baptist Convention in general and its local churches in particular, and even individual members, react to conflicts⁵²⁰. These are:

1. *Soul Competence/Religious Liberty*: the Baptists believe that every person, whether a believer or an unbeliever, is free to choose what the person believes is right in the religious realm⁵²¹. Therefore, no one should be forced to assent to any belief against

his will. However, this liberty does not exempt one from responsibility to the Word of God or from accountability to God Himself. In the words of one of the founders of the earliest Baptist church in modern times, “The ... government officer [or any other officer] is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine...”⁵²².

2. *The Priesthood of all Believers*: the Baptists believe that every believer (that is, church member) is a priest of God and may enter into His presence in prayer directly through the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. For this reason, no other mediator is needed between God and people⁵²³. This is related to the belief in soul competence, but it only has to do with believers in Jesus Christ. The biblical basis for this is found in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 5:9, 10.
3. *Congregational Polity*: Baptists believe in a democratic system of administration of the church and other organizations or institutions of the church. This stems from the belief in the priesthood of believers explained above. Consequently, there is no official (or ecclesiastical) elevation in Baptist setting⁵²¹. What is involved in these democratic processes “are careful Bible study, deliberation, and prayer with reference to the business at hand, followed by a vote of the congregation to determine the will of the majority”⁵²⁴.
4. *The Autonomy of the Local Church*: a local Baptist church is an independent body accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the head of the church. All human authority for governing a local Baptist church resides within the local church itself. Consequently, the church is autonomous or self-governing. No religious hierarchy outside the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices⁵²¹. In the words of a scholar, “There cannot be autonomy of the local church without the separation of church and state, and we have separation of church and state because of

soul liberty”⁴⁷⁶. However, autonomy does not mean isolation. A Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests and in an associational or cooperative tie. Hence, a local Baptist church is expected to voluntarily cooperate with a Baptist association, a Baptist conference, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and other ecumenical bodies like Bible Society of Nigeria, Christian Council of Nigeria and Christian Association of Nigeria⁵²⁵. The biblical basis for this is found in Colossians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, 16-24; 2 John 1-4; Matthew 16:18-27.

2.1.6.5. Interplay between Mediation and Pastoral Counselling

Considering the fact that pastoral counselling as one of the primary responsibilities of the church pastors is likely one of the means a pastor uses in resolving conflicts (especially through mediative dialogue or conciliation) among his church members, it is expedient to review the interplay between mediation and pastoral counselling⁵²⁶. Pastoral counselling has been described as “a form of counseling or psychotherapy in which insights and principles derived from theology and the behavioral sciences are used to help individuals, couples, families, and groups achieve healing and growth”⁵²⁷. Many things have been said about mediation earlier. However, succinctly, mediation is a process of assisting people in conflict to resolve their differences through the use of a neutral third party, which helps the conflicting parties in attaining a voluntary agreement. In pastoral counselling, the pastor is the arbiter who counsels the conflicting parties on what to do on how the conflicting would be settled. This is rather a conciliatory role. However, in mediation, the mediator assists the conflicting parties to reach a compromise in resolving their conflict. This difference (and somehow relationship) was explained further by a researcher in a study⁵²⁸. Meanwhile, especially in an intrapersonal conflict, a scholar has opined that mediative dialogue is “a

basic tool in counseling, which can be seen as a specific form of communication, which can have a role in the mediation of the person with himself or his relationship with God”.

Furthermore, some scholars have reiterated the necessity of pastoral counselling in the process of resolving conflicts in the church⁵²⁹. A theologian asserted, “Doing mediation not only gives hope but also causes long-term counselling issues to bubble to the surface”⁵³⁰. From this assertion, and as explained by the theologian, pastoral counselling on many occasions emanate from mediation sessions⁵³⁰. However, another theologian opined that mediation “...has significant continuities with therapeutic care and counseling...”¹⁰³. This theologian viewed mediation as “ a distinct professional and theoretical model that can be appropriated by the churches to supplement pastoral care and counseling in important ways, giving ministry a competence in working with social conflict that it has not had in the therapeutic pastoral tradition” ¹⁰³.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Inasmuch as “a theoretical reflection allows for a better understanding as to why certain terms and approaches are used (and sometimes confused) in research and practice”, or simply put, “the theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs” this section will examine only two theories that are relevant to this study^{531, 532}. The main theories for this study are: Transformative Theory (as conflict resolution and mediation theory) and Public Sphere Theory (as social media theory). Meanwhile, other theories of conflict resolution and mediation, as well as social media theories, are also briefly reviewed. In spite of this, a scholar has assumed that “there is not in existence, a universally agreed framework of knowledge for peace and transformation of conflicts”⁴⁵⁸.

2.2.1. Transformative Theory

Transformative theory of conflict describes a unique approach to conflict intervention that was first enunciated by two scholars⁵³³. Many other scholars have studied this theory since then. Also known as transformative mediation, transformative theory of conflict takes a social and communicative view of human conflict by getting “beyond individual problem solving and sees as its primary goal the need to develop individual empowerment and empathy for others”⁵³⁴. Two explanations to transformative mediation are *empowerment* and *recognition*⁵³⁵. The reason is that the transformative method to mediation does not seek resolution of the direct problem but rather seeks the enablement and communal recognition of the parties involved⁵³⁶. In a researcher’s words, “parties are empowered in mediation when they clearly see what matters to them and why, and when they recognize that what matters is important”⁵³⁴.

This theory is in contrast to problem-solving mediation. The aim of problem-solving mediation is to resolve “specific disputes between parties and coming up with a mutually acceptable solution to the immediate, short-term problem. In [it], the mediator normally plays a very active role in guiding the process”⁵³⁷. Although both approaches use a third party to help the conflicting parties to deal with the conflict in a new way, there are many dissimilarities between transformative and problem-solving mediation. A comparison has been made between problem solving mediation and transformative mediation. Below is a table showing this comparison:

Table 2.6: A Comparison Between Transformative and Problem Solving Mediation⁵³⁸

	Transformative Mediation	Problem-Solving Mediation
Assumptions about conflict	Conflict is an opportunity for moral growth and transformation. Conflict tends to be a long-term process.	Conflict is a problem in need of a solution. Conflict is a short-term situation.
Ideal response to conflict	Facilitate parties' empowerment and recognition of others.	Take collaborative steps to solve identified problem; maximize joint gains.
Goal of mediation	Parties' empowerment and recognition of others.	Settlement of the dispute.

Mediator role	Secondary: parties are seen as experts, with motivation and capacity to solve own problems with minimum help. Mediator is responsive to parties.	Mediator is expert, who directs problem-solving process.
Mediator actions	Mediator explains concept of mediation, but lets parties set goals, direct process, design ground rules. Makes it clear settlement is only one of a variety of possible outcomes. Mediator "microfocuses" on parties' statements, lets them frame issues themselves. Mediators allow parties to take discussions where they want them to go; encouraging discussion of all issues that are of importance to the parties, regardless of whether or not they are easily negotiable; Mediators encourage mutual recognition of relational and identity issues as well as needs and interests. Mediators encourage an examination of the past as a way of encouraging recognition of the other. Emotions are seen as an integral part of the conflict process; mediators encourage their expression. Mediators encourage parties' deliberation of situation and analysis of options; parties' design settlement (if any) themselves and are free to pursue other options at any time.	Mediator directs parties. Mediator explains goal is settlement, designs process to achieve settlement, sets ground rules. May consult parties about these issues, but mediator takes lead. Mediator "categorizes" case, frames it for disputants. Mediators direct the discussions, dropping issues which are not amenable to negotiation (for example, relational or identity issues) and focusing on areas "ripe" for resolution (usually negotiable interests). Mediators discourage discussion of the past, as it tends to lead to blaming behaviors; focus instead is on the present and future -- how to solve the current problem. Emotions are seen as extraneous to "real issues." Mediators try to avoid parties' emotional statements, or emotions are tightly controlled. Mediators use their knowledge to develop options for settlement; can be quite directive about settlement terms.
Mediator focus	Mediators focus on parties' interactions, looking for opportunities for empowerment and/or recognition of the other.	Mediators focus on parties' situation and interests, looking for opportunities for joint gains and mutually-satisfactory agreements.
Use of time	Time is open-ended; parties spend as much time on each activity as they want to. No pre-set "stages" as in problem-solving mediation.	Mediator sets time limits, encourages parties to move on or meet deadlines. Mediator moves parties from "stage" to "stage."
Mediation: definition of success	Any increase in parties' empowerment and/or recognition of the other -- "small steps count."	Mutually-agreeable settlement.

In a follow-up article, two scholars gave a list of 10 marks of transformative mediation that differentiate its practice from other forms of third-party mediation processes⁵³⁵.

In the words of these scholars, the transformative mediator (or mediators) will:

1. In the opening statement, explain the mediator's role, and the objectives of mediation as being focused on empowerment and recognition.

2. Leave responsibility for the outcomes with the parties.
3. Not be judgmental about the parties' views and decisions.
4. Take an optimistic view of the parties' competence and motives.
5. Allow and be responsive to parties' expression of emotions.
6. Allow for and explore parties' uncertainty.
7. Remain focused on what is currently happening in the mediation setting.
8. Be responsive to parties' statements about past events.
9. Realize that conflict can be a long-term process and that mediation is one intervention in a longer sequence of conflict interactions.
10. Feel (and express) a sense of success when empowerment and recognition occur, even in small degrees. They do not see a lack of settlement as a "failure"⁵³⁵.

These scholars later opined that “the strongest feature of the entire body of work on transformative mediation is its consistent and intensive effort to link sound theory with useful practice”⁵³⁹.

2.2.2. Public Sphere Theory

Public sphere theory is one of the theories that can be used for a contextual framework for social media. This theory was created in the 18th century but modernized by Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist and critical theorist⁵⁴⁰. Public sphere is “a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them”⁵⁴¹. It is also viewed as various ways where people can liberally “express, participate, communicate and share their understanding, ideas and information that involve political, social issues and other diverse things that affect their social coexistence; peace and conflicts inclusive”²⁶⁹. The platforms for this information sharing can be through the traditional media, parliament houses, clubhouses, coffee or beer joints, saloon places, marketplaces, and even religious places like churches and mosques. However, with the advent and constant evolution of information and communication technologies, the character of Habermas’ public sphere theory has

metamorphosed from an simple physical, locational platform to a more advanced, cyber-based but complex communication space⁵⁴². Social media, in particular, have made this advanced change possible.

2.2.3. Reflections on Reviewed Theories

Sustainable peace, which is desirable in order to have peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, cannot be achieved in a vacuity. It has to take place in making every effort to resolve existing conflicts and prevent future conflicts. One of the forms the conflict resolution and conflict transformation is mediative dialogue. The Nigerian Baptist Convention as a faith-based organization has involved itself through its arms, pastors and members in resolving conflicts among its members. The Internet generally and social media specifically have become a veritable means of communication. Since communication takes a pivot role in conflict resolution, social media have become one of the ways through which one can resolve conflicts meditatively. There have been many theories of conflict resolution, mediation and social media. For this research, the combination of Transformative Theory (as conflict resolution and mediation theory) and Public Sphere Theory (as social media theory) are used as theoretical frameworks. These theories, as agreed by furthestmost theorists, are not an end in themselves, but they are a foundation for researchers to navigate through present-day problems and, in the process, come to profound means of understanding⁵⁴³.

2.3. Review of Previous Empirical Studies

Faith-based organizations, especially the Nigerian Baptist Convention, have been involved in managing and resolving conflicts and transforming conflict situations to relative peaceful coexistence of people in society. They have, in many forms, joined the United

Nations to achieve Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

A study was carried out recently that investigated the interrelationship between faith-based organizations and democratic governance in Nigeria with the study on the Nigerian Baptist Convention between 1999 and 2019 in the realization of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁴⁴. The research established that the Nigerian Baptist Convention as a faith-based organization and its organs “have done much in the pursuit” of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations⁵⁴⁴.

A researcher has earlier carried out a study on religious conflict in contemporary Nigerian society⁷³. The study aimed at contributing “practical, theological reflections to the ongoing search for how Nigeria will end the undesired religious conflict between Muslims and Christians and build a peaceful and harmonious society”⁷³. The researcher concluded that “... conflict management and conflict resolution are also crucial to the work of conflict transformation. The Church is not taking over the responsibilities of the state or displacing relevant NGOs; rather, they are all mutually involved in the search for unity, stability and development”⁷³.

In another empirical research, a scholar summarized all types of conflicts as managed by Baptist pastors thus:

conflict over substantive pastor, conflict within the pastorate, conflict between the pastor and church members, conflict between the pastorate and diaconate, as well as conflict between the church founders and the pastor. Others include mismanagement of church funds, ‘unbaptistic’ practices (i.e. practices that are not acceptable in the [Nigerian Baptist Convention] such as speaking in tongues, vigil, deliverance ministries, etc.), marital problems of the pastors, misuse of power by the church pastor, pastor having immoral affairs with church members, introduction of new belief system and overstay of church officers in position(s) such as the Church Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Auditor⁵⁴⁵.

Earlier, a scholar had carried out a study on conflicts between pastors and church members over the policies of the Nigerian Baptist Convention⁴⁵¹. The study “examined the policies, causes of the conflicts resulting from their implementation and the effects on the church to provide suggestions toward policy-oriented conflicts reduction”⁴⁵¹. The study concluded that there is a “need for great enlightenment on Baptist policies to avoid intradenominational conflicts”⁴⁵¹.

In spite of the fact a study on marital conflict was carried out among Yoruba Christian couples in the North West of England, the research was extended to the perspective of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on marriage. Therefore, the research by extension studied traditional Yoruba marriage institutions as practised by church members of the Convention in southwest Nigeria⁵⁴⁶. Part of the conclusion of this study provides biblical and spiritual means of averting these conflicts and resolving them if they occur⁵⁴⁶.

While it is evident from the cited studies above that Baptist pastors have been resolving conflicts in their pastoral ministries, there has been no empirical evidence that they have been using social media to do this. However, this researcher carried out a study some years ago. The researcher used some Baptist pastors in the Ibadan metropolis as case studies by training them on how to use the Internet in their ministries to “improve their information dissemination capabilities to their members that are using the Internet”⁵⁴⁷. The research found out and concluded that “every pastor should be trained formally or informally on how to use the Internet...to disseminate information in his or her ministries. This will make pastors more relevant in this information age and more efficient in his or her ministries to the members of his church in particular and the whole world in general”⁵⁴⁷. This researcher provided course contents for the training and even published a textbook that many Baptist pastors have access to⁵⁴⁸. Ten years after the research, at the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19 and its resultant physical distancing and lockdown of many public places, this researcher carried out another

research to found out “the possibility of Internet ministry as an alternative ministry opportunity in the period of social/physical distancing in religious settings as a way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 pandemic”⁵⁴⁹. It was discovered through the research that while some of the pastors had been using the Internet in their pastoral ministry before the pandemic, the pandemic forced most of them to start using the Internet during the pandemic, and many of them agreed that they will continue to use the Internet as an alternative means in their pastoral ministries⁵⁴⁹.

2.4. Summary of Reviewed Literature

Many concepts relating to this research have been reviewed above. Conflict, which has been described as opposing needs, ideas or goals within an individual and/or among two or more people, is inevitable in a society. To manage and resolve conflicts, some means have to be explored. The conflicts have to be transformed to peaceful coexistence among the people. This results in peacebuilding. One means of managing, resolving and transforming conflicts is mediation, especially sustainable mediative dialogue, which is an attempt to amicably find a balance between two or more conflicting needs, ideas or goals amongst two or more people. There are various ways mediators have been doing this. With the advent of the Internet, especially social media, these various ways of mediation can be done through social media.

As revealed in the review of related literature in this chapter, many studies have been done on conflict and how to resolve, manage and transform it. There has been growing research on peacebuilding and the use of mediation, especially mediative dialogue, to resolve conflict and promote peaceful co-existence. It has also been revealed that faith-based organizations, especially the Nigerian Baptist Convention, have been involved in managing and resolving conflicts, and in transforming conflict situations to a relative peaceful

coexistence of people in the society. Furthermore, it has also been revealed that some Baptist pastors have been making use of the Internet in their pastoral ministries. However, one fact is evident as a gap to be filled with this research: how faith-based organizations, especially the Nigerian Baptist Convention through its church pastors, can use social media to meditatively resolve conflicts among their church members and other people outside the church thereby promoting sustainable peace and making Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals the United Nations – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development – more achievable before the year 2030.

Endnotes

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Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Building on the mediation approach to resolving conflict as suggested by many scholars, this researcher proposed to analyze the use of mediative dialogue as a means of conflict resolution to promote sustainable peaceful coexistence in the society and its theological implications¹. As “one of the most dynamically developing communication platforms,” this researcher proposed to analyze to what extent the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention are making use of the social media to resolve conflicts mediatively to achieve peaceful and non-violent societies as one of the blueprints of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations².

Research design has been described as “the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent and achievable empirical research”³. It is a stage-by-stage process employed by a researcher before data collection and analysis begins to attain the objective of the research in an effective way. The crux of research design is to accomplish the aim of the study unmistakably, accurately, precisely and carefully, control unnecessary variance and reduce faults³.

Therefore, the research design employed in this study was descriptive qualitative research. This was done through three qualitative research methods: sample surveys, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The researcher also interacted with stakeholders in the process.

3.2. Population of the Study

The targeted population of this research consisted of Nigerian Baptist pastors of churches in the Baptist Associations in the Ibadan metropolis. Ibadan metropolis was chosen because there is what can be term as a state conference (a conference, which is a minuscule form of the Convention, is an ecclesiological body [or diocese] in a geographical area or state consists of no less than six Baptist associations with at least eighteen full-time Baptist trained pastors out of which twelve must be ordained) in the metropolis⁴. There are thirty-five (35) of such bodies currently in the Nigerian Baptist Convention⁵.

The chosen conference for the study is known as the Ibadan Baptist Conference. Ibadan Baptist Conference is one of the largest conferences in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. It comprises Baptist churches in the Ibadan metropolis. Besides, there are substantial numbers of pastors in the metropolis compared relatively to other areas in the country. These pastors are church pastors against other Baptist pastors that are denominational officers or lecturers in theological institutions. There is no accurate record of the total population of these pastors. However, there are about two hundred and twenty-eight (228) pastors in the Ibadan metropolis that have records with the Ibadan Baptist Conference⁶. There was also consideration of some key officers at the headquarters of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Ibadan.

3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample of the population for the study consisted of twenty pastors (fourteen males and six females) randomly and purposively selected from the pool of church pastors with experience in the use of social media in the Ibadan metropolis⁷. Inferences were drawn from this sample to the targeted population of the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgment sampling. It is a technique where a deliberate choice of participants is made

because of the qualities that the participants possess⁸. This is usually used in qualitative research to recognize and choose “the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources”⁸.

The purposive sampling (using homogeneous sampling method) was done by sampling survey through a mini-questionnaire sent by WhatsApp Messenger in the WhatsApp group that almost all the church pastors in Ibadan Baptist Conference are members. WhatsApp Messenger was selected because of its wide use amongst church pastors in the targeted population, as confirmed in another study carried out by this researcher recently⁹. Purposive sampling was used because the research was purposely done among church pastors using at least one aspect of social media to resolve conflicts in their ministries.

Although purposive sampling is a nonrandom technique that does not need fundamental concepts or a set number of participants, the sampling was further done randomly to select the definite number of participants that partook in the research. Five key officers (three male and two female) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention at the national level at its headquarters were also interacted with. The time frame of the research is between 2010 and 2020.

3.4. Instrument for Data Collection

This research work was qualitative. Qualitative research has been described as a type of research that gathers and relates with non-numerical data that aims to interpret meaning from the data that help people understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places¹⁰. As defined by a scholar,

Qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses on the way of people interpret, and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals. It makes the use of interviews, diaries, journals, classroom observations and immersions; and open-ended questionnaires to obtain, analyze, and interpret the data content analysis of visual and textual materials, and oral history¹⁰.

As a researcher noted, “qualitative tools have been noted as beneficial for acquiring deeper insights into subjective experiences...”¹¹. This research relied on primary sources of data gathered by oral (and at times, written) interviews, which have been regarded as “the most widely used tool for collecting data in qualitative research”¹². There was also reliance on secondary data in the form of analyses of some related documents. This is “a dynamic process weaving together recognition of emerging themes, identification of key ideas or units of meaning and material acquired from the literature”¹⁰.

3.4.1. Primary Data

The primary data for this research were semi-structured interviews with some respondents. Although semi-structured interviews are similar to structured interviews because the respondents’ questions were asked were planned beforehand, instead of using closed questions as in structured interviews, semi-structured interviews were based on open-ended questions¹³. On account of its flexibility, the semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted orally as much as possible. Nevertheless, some of the interviews were conducted through instant messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram where physical contact was not possible, especially in this era of physical distancing occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.^{11, 14}

3.4.2. Secondary Data

The secondary data analyzed in this research are as many documents that the researcher could have access to in local churches, associations, and the conference within the scope of the research and in the headquarters of the Nigerian Baptist Convention at Oke Bola, Ibadan, Nigeria. These provided a significant advantage for research purposes as using existing data sources, with significant amounts of information, at a relatively cheaper cost

and readily available made the research easier¹⁵. The document analysis also served “as a means of triangulation” that gave more credence to the research¹⁶.

3.5. Validity of the Instrument

It is expedient to establish the validity and reliability of the main instrument used in this research, that is, semi-structured interviews. The reason is that an instrument would be adjudged a good measure when the data collection passes the tests of validity and reliability. Validity here is about whether the study can be trusted as well as whether it is assessing what it is supposed to assess, while in relation to reliability of the instrument, the data are subjective and in narrative form that might eventually cause difficulty for the analysis part. Consequently, research is considered reliable when there is the consistency of interview data and, without bias, measure the concepts that it is supposed to measure¹⁷. Some researchers believe that the validity and reliability of semi-structured interviews depend majorly on the person (the researcher) that is conducting the interview¹⁷.

3.6. Reliability of the Instrument

To evaluate the validity and reliability of data collected for this research, the following factors were taken into consideration: the relevance of the data to the research questions; application of the data to the sampled population in this study; application of data to the time frame of this study; availability/non-availability of original sources of the data for the study; the value of the data in comparison to the cost of its acquisition, the risk of getting the data; the verification of the data; and the usability of the data¹⁵.

3.7. Administration of Method of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews mainly were used to carry out this research. So, transcriptions from the recorded interview sessions and collation of responses from interviews through WhatsApp and/or Telegram were the primary data collection methods for analysis¹⁸.

3.8. Method of Data Analysis

A scholar has defined data analysis as “as a process of cleaning, transforming, and modeling data to discover useful information for business decision-making”¹⁹. Although there are many types and methods of data analysis, this study used descriptive qualitative analysis in analysing the collected data. Some documents obtained during the research were also used in the analysis.

Endnotes

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1.1.1 Demographic Data Presentation

Against the backdrop that the sampled pastors interviewed during the research were purposively and randomly selected from a preliminary survey, the selected results from the survey through a mini-questionnaire (Appendix I) are firstly presented and discussed. The mini-questionnaire was sent by WhatsApp Messenger in the WhatsApp group of Ibadan and District Baptist Pastors' Fellowship, and almost all the church pastors in Ibadan Baptist Conference are members. About two hundred and twenty-eight (228) pastors in the Ibadan metropolis had records with the Ibadan Baptist Conference when this research was carried out¹. Out of these pastors, one hundred and eight-three (183) (representing 88.2%) were members of the WhatsApp group as at the time the mini-questionnaire was sent out. One hundred and twenty-six (126) pastors (representing 68.8%) responded to the mini-questionnaire. Of interest for this section of the research is the presence of the respondents in each of Facebook and Twitter as social network services (SNS) and WhatsApp and Telegram as instant messaging (IM) apps that are the focus of this study. Figure 4.1 gives a graphic representation of this presence.

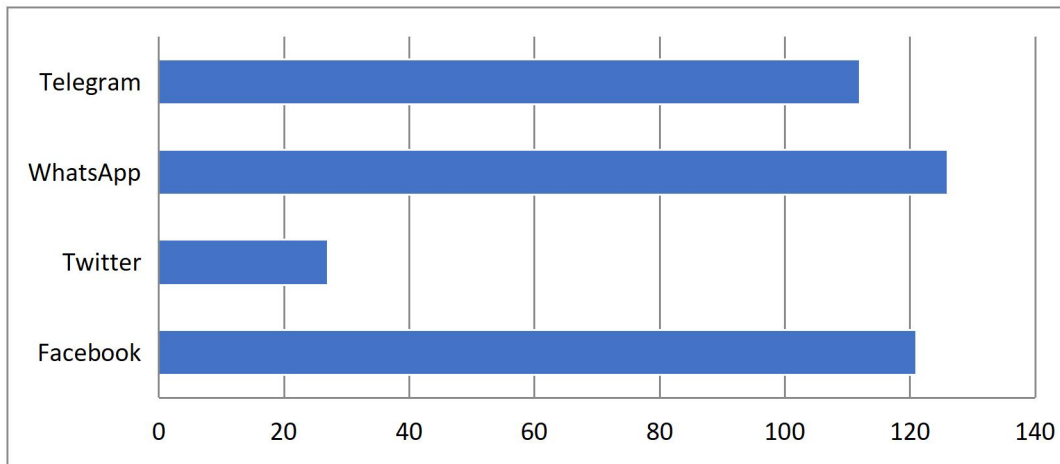


Figure 4.1: Presence of Ibadan Baptist Pastors on Social Media

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

From Figure 4.1, one hundred and twenty-one (121) respondents (representing 96.03%) are on Facebook; twenty-seven (27) respondents (representing 21.42%) are on Twitter; all the one hundred and twenty-six (126) pastors (representing 100%) are on WhatsApp Messenger; while one hundred and twelve (112) respondents (representing 88.88%) are on Telegram Messenger. These findings are similar to findings of another study carried out in Ghana among church leaders where “church leaders and church members, in general, possessed at least some basic computer skills to enable them to access and navigate social media platforms adopted by the churches”².

The twenty pastors that were interviewed were randomly selected from these respondents. The gender of the people selected was taken into consideration in order to get the fifteen males and five females that have been predetermined to be sampled for the study. (Eventually, fourteen male and six female pastors were interviewed.) Figure 4.2 shows a map of the Ibadan metropolis.

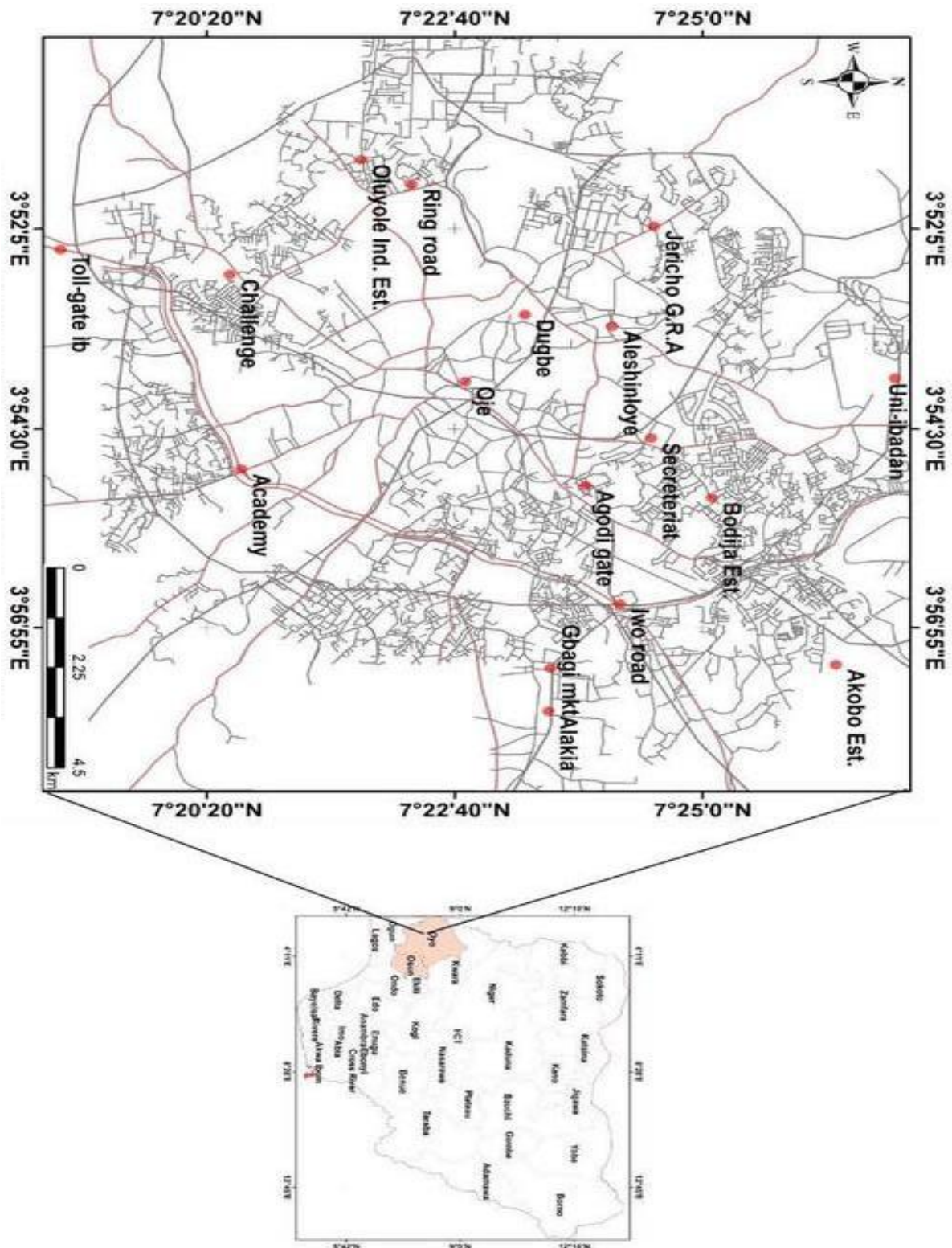


Figure 4.2: Map of the Ibadan Metropolis

Source: The Internet

Five other national denominational leaders of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (three males and two females) were also interviewed to know the opinions of the national leaders, not only local leaders, of the Baptist denomination on the subject matter. These national leaders are also trained pastors who used to be local church pastors before becoming national leaders. The details of each interviewed pastor are given in Appendix IV.

In the course of the research, the researcher had the privilege of interacting with two other revered Convention leaders. The first one was the immediate past Vice President (Ministerial) of the Convention – a theologian, Bible scholar and retired pastor of over four decades and one-time President of one of the theological seminaries of the Convention. The second person is the new President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, a theologian, scholar, and leading practitioner of conflict transformation and interreligious peacebuilding in Nigeria, Rev. Dr Israel Adelani Akanji. The responses of these two leaders are incorporated into the discussion below.

These results of the preliminary survey above support one of the propositions of this researcher that the majority of the pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in the Ibadan metropolis are on at least one category of social media. While most of the respondents are on Facebook, WhatsApp Messenger, and Telegram Messenger, very few are on Twitter. An earlier study by this researcher during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown in 2020 corroborates this. The research showed that many pastors used Facebook, WhatsApp Messenger and Telegram Messenger but seldom used Twitter in their ministries to their church members when they could not reach them physically because of the lockdown and social/physical distancing to curtail the spread of COVID-19³.

4.1.1.2 Presentation of Research Questions

Here is the presentation of the analysis of data and discussion of the findings from the semi-structured interview sessions and documents that the researcher had access to during the research. The presentation is based on the research questions stated in Chapter One.

4.2. Analysis of Data and Discussion of the Findings

The analysis and discussion are based on the research questions stated in Chapter One. Against the backdrop that all the interviewed people in this study are either “senior pastors” or “associate pastors” in a Baptist church and pastors as denominational leaders at the headquarters of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the word “pastor” or “respondent” is simply used for them in this Discussion of the Findings. Other terms like “scholar”, “researcher”, “theologian”, and the like are used for people that their works are referred to in the discussion.

4.2.1. Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the philosophy of peaceful coexistence and the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations?

This research question was addressed in the light of the views of Baptist church pastors about the peaceful coexistence of people in their churches in relation to the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, especially Goal Number Sixteen: Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

4.2.1.1. Peaceful Coexistence

While a scholar opined that conflict is a much-needed tool whereby coexistence could be likely in any society, another scholar thought that conflict, being “a product of human relationships [is] an inevitable and integral part of human life”^{4, 5}. Despite these opinions, almost all the pastors interviewed admitted that there should be peaceful coexistence among

their church members and other people in the society since “peace is the very essence of coming together as a church”⁶. One of the pastors buttressed this with one of the hymns that the pastor always leads his church members to sing⁷. The lyrics of this hymn go thus:

1. Brethren, let us walk together
In the bonds of love and peace;
Can it be a question whether
Brethren should from conflict cease?
‘Tis in union,
Hope and joy, and love increase.
2. While we journey homeward, let us
Help each other on the road;
Foes on every side beset us,
Snares through all the way are strewed;
It becomes us
Each to bear a brother’s load.
3. When we think how much our Father
Has passed by, and does forgive;
Surely we should learn the rather
Free from wrath and strive to live,
Far removing
All that might offend or grieve.
4. Let us each esteem his brother,
Better than himself to be;
And each one prefer another,
Full of love, from envy free;
Happy are we,
When in this we all agree⁸.

This position of the respondents in peaceful coexistence among their church members and other people in the society is reiterated by two scholars who asserted that “The main purpose for the church's existence is to provide an environment of peace, harmony and sound

human development. Unresolved church conflicts result in church splits, civil litigation, divorce and a decrease in the number of church members”⁹. Another scholar simply opined that “peace is the prime value in all human societies... [and it] guarantees and facilitates human life, good health and societal life and health”¹⁰. Therefore, the scholar went further to say that “peaceful co-existence on the other means a situation whereby all the members of a given society live in harmony, love, mutual respect, tolerance and so on, irrespective of their differences in terms of religion, tribe, languages or social status”¹⁰.

Interestingly, a pastor thought that “it is possible not to have conflict, or avoid it when it wants to start”¹¹. The pastor argued that this could take place if people can resolve “not to quarrel with people, no matter what happens”¹¹. Some researchers substantiated this argument when they asserted, “Some try to avoid conflict as much as possible they can. They believe that the conflict is a signal problem in their relationships, they think a ‘nice’ people do not experience conflict, or that conflict will inevitably bring frustration, anger or anxiety”¹². While the respondent thought that avoiding conflicts has worked for her, many other pastors have different opinions that there is no organization where there is no conflict¹¹. Since every human being is created and wired differently, there is bound to be conflict in every relationship, whether social, marital, spiritual¹³. Two researchers even asserted, “No matter how careful or how men avoid [conflict], it must come”, and another scholar corroborated this by affirming that “conflict cannot be avoided”^{14, 15}. In the words of another scholar, “Conflict in itself constitutes no social menace, especially when the parties involved use it to improve their society”¹⁶.

In the words of a theologian, “Because the church is so vulnerable to conflict today, the creative handling of controversy is no longer an option but a necessity”¹⁷. A scholar substantiated this by affirming: “...church conflict is prevalent. In fact, no church can claim immunity from it”¹⁸. However, many scholars and stakeholders in peacebuilding have argued

for and against the prevention of conflict and possible pathways to peaceful coexistence^{19, 20,}

²¹. A theologian has thought “that conflict can be either creative or destructive, functional or dysfunctional”¹⁷.

Some researchers categorized conflicts into two: negative and positive conflicts¹². In their words,

Conflict is inevitable. It is negative when it leads to violence, undermines the communication relationship between the parties involved in the conflict, stimulates people to become uncooperative, or prevents the parties from addressing real issues or problems. However, the conflict can be a positive creative force, when it increases communication, releases stored feelings, leads to the solution of problems, results in the growth of the relationship between parties in conflict, or improves performance¹².

It was the view of a respondent that the church as “the light” and “salt” of the world (Matthew 5:13-15) has to “shine into the darkness” of the world and “season” the world with its sweetness by showing the example of living in peace with one another and other people in the society²². A scholar reiterated this view in his study²³. To support this view, a researcher asserted, “The church must be the salt and the light to the world, not only by the way she resolves conflict among her members, but also by the way she promotes peacebuilding in the larger community”²⁴. A theologian also corroborated this view when the theologian said, “It is the business of the church to change the world, not only by changing individuals but also by being a different kind of human community in the midst of the world”²⁵. Another theologian gave some implications of this²⁶. According to him, Christians are basically different from non-Christians. Nevertheless, they must infiltrate non-Christian society. Although Christians are ethically and spiritually different, they must let their light shine so that their good conduct (that amounts to and promotes peace and justice) will be seen. Furthermore, Christians can have an influence on the non-Christian society by hampering social degeneration and dissipating the darkness of evil (and corrupt practices). Christians

must also preserve their distinctiveness as well as their beliefs, values, morals and lifestyle as they engross themselves in the life of the world²⁶.

In spite of this, another researcher has faulted the view of the church as “the light” and “salt” of the world because, according to him, the church has lost its “reputation as a community of believers”¹⁸. The researcher argued further that Christians have demonstrated that they cannot live in harmony and resolve conflicts, but rather, they are turning “to secular world to do that for them, and the ability to attract the world to Christ in anyway related to the reputation of the church but the reputation is badly tarnished and abused because of the inability to effectively manage crises”¹⁸.

The different perceptions of people to the same issue can impair the peaceful coexistence of people if such differences are not managed with care. For example, a youth pastor asserted, “The ways youth react to issues are different from the ways adults react to such issues”²⁷. These different perceptions have to do with the beliefs, values, attitudes and worldviews. A scholar discussed extensively these different perceptions and concluded that it is essential to understand and appreciate the differences in perception to improve the ways one communicates and to cope well with people from other backgrounds²⁸. These differences in perception are because of the gap between most youth who are “digital natives” and the older people who are “digital immigrants”²⁹. As cited by a scholar,

...the digital natives represent the first generation to grow up with the digital technology of the 21st century and spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital musical players, videocams, cell phones and all other toys and tools of the digital age, whereas the digital immigrants are those struggling to adapt the new digital technology such as turning to the internet for information in second tier manner rather than first³⁰.

One of the pastors was philosophical in referring to peaceful coexistence and conflicts among his church members and other people in the society as a “challenge” that every human has to manage³¹. In the words of another pastor, “Peaceful coexistence of church members is

non-negotiable”¹³. This is because only an organization, agency, or community can grow and develop where peace is allowed. In substantiating this in line with the policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, one of the denominational leaders of the Convention opined,

[The Convention] is a very peace-loving religious organization. It is a denomination bound together in love, tolerance, discipline, respect for dignity and humanity. It is a denomination where fellowship among the brethren [church members] is paramount. It is a denomination where nothing has placed somebody above the other, where justice and equity are enjoyed. Its worship is congregationalism where the members are given high regard. Likewise, the members have free access to their pastors, regarded as the spiritual fathers [and mothers]. The members and their leaders relate with one another freely. There may be some abuses, but we believe it is the best³².

To corroborate this, good relations with neighbours are identified as factors that positively affect peaceful coexistence in a report³³. However, as admitted by all the interviewed pastors, this perception of peaceful coexistence is based on many biblical injunctions on living in peace with other people. A scholar has reiterated this in a study³⁴. These biblical injunctions on peaceful coexistence with other people are discussed more later.

Having peaceful coexistence will enable church members to fellowship and worship together in harmony because a house that stands against itself can never stand. Peaceful coexistence is the strength of any church, and it enables the church to achieve more in growing numerically, financially, morally and spiritually¹³. Some scholars have carried out a study on the effect of church conflict on the growth of the church³⁵. In the study, the scholars discovered that conflicts retard the church's growth. They, therefore, recommended that the church should try as much as possible to avoid conflicts³⁵. In their words,

The church leaders should be accommodative to all other leaders so as to avoid exclusion from the running of the church. They should avoid running the church as sole proprietors or rather like a personal property. The church should adopt strategies that will bring the members together rather than scatter them and, as such, conflict should be avoided at all cost³⁵.

Conversely, a researcher has proven that conflicts, especially church leadership conflicts, are the inspiration for church growth in Nigeria³⁶. This is discussed more later.

A female pastor thought that “where there is misunderstanding, the pastor will not have progress, but when we walk together in love, in peace, there will be progress in the church”³⁷. This opinion was corroborated by two scholars who recommended, “Peace is essential in human life without which, there will be no meaningful progress in the society. Peace should be pursued with every cost for human beings to live in harmony”¹⁴. In further argument about unity of the church members, a theologian gave three reasons why the members of the church must unite. In his opinion, unity is theologically crucial because the Bible teaches it, it is a strong testimony in favour of the church among people out of the church, and there is a common enemy – persecution from non-church members – to contend with³⁸.

A pastor viewed the church as a family where every church member is a family member³⁹. To him, the church exists in order that people should live together as a family – a family of God. Being family members imply that people should relate together harmoniously, seeking the welfare of one another. This welfare must be paramount to every member of the church³⁹. This concept of family membership of church members is an impetus that makes church members strive to relate peacefully with one another. Even if there is any rancour or misunderstanding, it is easier for the pastor and other church leaders to intervene and settle the conflict before it escalates³⁹.

It was the opinion of one of the respondents that the issue of promoting sustainable peace through mediative dialogue is the collective effort of both the pastor and church members¹³. This pastor argued that there is little or nothing the pastor can do if the church members do not cooperate with the pastor in this regard¹³. Another pastor corroborated this argument by referring to some Bible verses, especially Psalm 133 cited below²². In the words

of a scholar in support of this, “Peacemaking or conflict resolution is at the very center of the gospel and therefore a responsibility of each and every Christian. Indeed, it is the central component in the Great Commission (Matt 28), and all Christians are supposed to carry it on to all human beings”²⁴.

While a pastor thought that the congregational system of government in the Baptist denomination where everyone can speak is fostering peace and stability in the church, it has been discovered that this freedom of expression is causing conflicts in many Baptist churches⁴⁰. Someone has observed that there will be three opinions when there are two Baptists. However, there is the opinion that the beliefs in the priesthood of all believers and competency of every soul that made the Baptists adopt the congregational system of government have their advantages and disadvantages. Although “congregational polity is an essential Baptist distinctive and no one who is serious minded will tamper with it”, many unsuccessful attempts have been made in the time past to revisit this church polity^{41, 42}.

4.2.1.2. In Relation with the Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

In specifically relating the views of Baptist pastors about peaceful coexistence with Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations that addresses peace and justice, many of the respondents were aware of these goals while some were not but have the concepts of the aspiration⁴³. A respondent reiterated that Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations the Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations “is all out to have peace and encourage justice”⁴⁴. Another respondent stated the importance of everyone living together with equity, fairness and justice⁴⁵. The respondent thought that people are bound to step on one another’s toes when there are relationships and justice and equity must be in place to resolve these resultant

conflicts. While the respondent argued that the aspirations of the United Nations in Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals “may not be the same as God wants people to live harmoniously together, yet the aspiration is a way of promoting peace globally”⁴⁵. Furthermore, this pastor enunciated, “Since every church exists within a community, if there is the promotion of peace in each church, there will be relative peace in the society and the world at large. In this way, the church is working with the United Nations to achieve this [Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals]”⁴⁵.

One of the Convention leaders opined that achieving the goal of peaceful coexistence of people in the society is the collective efforts of the governments (including their ministries and agencies like police, law courts), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), traditional and community leaders, religious leaders and every citizen and non-citizen in a country⁴⁶. A scholar agreed with these two opinions by saying,

...it is universally acknowledged that no country or nation can achieve sustainable development or economic growth in an atmosphere of inter-tribal and inter-religious hostilities, hence the need to promote national integration and peaceful co-existence so as to ensure social-economic and political growth and sustainable development¹⁰.

In agreement with this, another scholar simply asserted that “development takes place under conditions of peaceful atmosphere or conflict-free”⁴⁷.

Another pastor reiterated the importance of the church in relation to achieving this goal by stating that “the church is one of the organizations that are helping the United Nations to promote peaceful coexistence in the society”⁴⁸. A researcher affirmed this, that the church is a major active stakeholder in the Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals that have to do with peace and justice in the society⁴⁹. In her words, “The church plays a very crucial role in the promotion of conflict resolution through peace and reconciliation in a society”⁴⁹. A theologian gave a theological basis for justice in the society by affirming that “the Creator of the Universe is a God of justice who saddles spiritual leaders with the

responsibility of ensuring fairness and equity in the community”⁵⁰. Many of the pastors interviewed emphasise the importance of justice in relation to peace. They argued that peace could not thrive in a society that lacks justice, and where there is no peace, development in the society will be difficult. Some scholars corroborated this when they asserted that it is evident that “no society, community, state or nation” can attain speedy development amidst of conflict and ferocity⁵¹. Likewise, a report that emphasized the relationship between peace and justice in Africa was published recently⁵². One of the report's recommendations is, “In order to achieve sustainable peace, peace processes must address the root causes of conflicts as well as the injustice which victims suffered”⁵².

One of the pastors gave an illustration of a three-legged chair or table. The pastor compared peace, justice and development to the three legs of the chair or the table³². The pastor reasoned that the chair or the table could not stand without any of the “legs”, especially, “other things will not work well when peace is missing”³². In relation to the church, another pastor asserted, “There is no way there can be peaceful coexistence among people if they are not fair to one another. If there is partiality in the church, it will be difficult for people to relate well”³¹. In support of this view, the importance of impartiality in maintaining peace has been reiterated by a scholar⁵³. Likewise, another scholar has tried to trace the history of the growing link between peace and justice and concluded that peace and justice are interconnected⁵⁴.

As a way to support the United Nations in achieving this Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations that addresses peace and justice, the Baptist World Alliance, the world umbrella body for all Baptists throughout the world, has a commission named “Commission on Human Rights, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation”⁵⁵. Among the aims of this commission are to explore

...how the BWA and BWA Baptists can further human rights broadly and peace and reconciliation specifically. It monitors situations; assists Baptist victims of violence or

oppression; raises awareness of human rights abuses; and mediates when Baptists are involved in conflict, either with each other or with others. It reflects theologically; networks; engages alongside the work of the BWA, particularly at the United Nations; and resources Baptists at local, national, and international levels⁵⁵.

Apart from believing in many biblical injunctions on promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, being one of the leading members of this alliance, subscribes to these aims, and this is one of the reasons its pastors and other members also believe in promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts as early as possible.

A similar agency on peacebuilding established and funded by the Nigerian Baptist Convention is Ecumenism for Development and Peace Initiative (EDAPI)⁵⁶. As highlighted by one of the Convention leaders who oversees the non-governmental agency, among the agency's objectives are to make awareness and train people in the grassroots towards achieving peace and developments, and collaborate with other similar organizations to bring about sustainable development³². A copy of a promotional flyer about the agency is found in Appendix XI.

Remarkably, it is observed that some scholars have expressed some doubts about the workability of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, especially the Goal Sixteen of the Goals in religious settings⁵⁷. The reason is that the goal, in particular, is “seen as difficult on account of religious particularisms sometimes getting in the way of dialogue and collaboration”⁵⁷. Religious leaders are also assumed to have a significant influence in causing and escalating conflicts⁵⁸.

In spite of this doubt and supposition, it is concluded that “religious dynamics play a role in conflict and insecurity, and therefore need to be part of the solution”, and religious leaders should be engaged in achieving the Goals^{57, 58}. This is against the backdrop that “...religion or Christianity has an important role to play in settlement of conflict in the

society” and “the lives of millions of Africans continue to revolve around religion, even amidst the deterioration of the quality of life which is largely due to incompetent governance by many governments^{14, 50}. In support of this, a scholar has given some reasons why faith-based organizations in general and religious leaders, in particular, should not be ignored in the bids to promote the peaceful existence of people in the society, thereby achieving Goal Sixteen of the Goals⁵⁹. These reasons, according to the scholar, are:

1. credibility as a trusted institution;
2. a respected set of values;
3. moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments;
4. unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to rehumanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict;
5. a capability to mobilize community, nation, and international support for a peace process;
6. an ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement; and
7. a sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise debilitating, obstacles⁵⁹.

In Nigeria, “religious leaders have been identified as one of the institutional actors and stakeholders within the civil society that possess” the influence of reaching out to people to achieve the Goals⁶⁰. This is against the backdrop that

...religious actors are generally believed to possess certain specific qualities that enable them to positively influence a peace process, more so than politicians. [...religious actors] are often perceived to have stronger moral and emotional credentials as well as a certain professionalism that commands the respect and confidence of conflict parties⁶¹.

Therefore, it is suggested that religious leaders should be partnered with to create public awareness that will make the public accept the Goals and actively be involved in actualizing the Goals, especially peaceful coexistence in the society⁶⁰. Being a religious leader who is one of the leading active practitioners in peace building in Nigeria, the new President of the

Nigerian Baptist Convention, in an interview with this researcher, reiterated the importance and roles of religious leaders in promoting peace in the society and resolving conflicts when they occur⁴⁶.

In spite of the efforts of religious leaders in partnership with other stakeholders in peacebuilding and the United Nations, the index of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, especially the Goal Sixteen of the Goals in Nigeria, remains stagnant with significant challenges remaining⁶². Factors that are responsible for this will be a subject for further study.

4.2.1.3. Mediative Dialogue by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

A respondent defined mediative dialogue as “an art of bringing different conflicting parties together. It is a means of allowing different parties to express themselves thereby bringing amicable resolution of conflict and allowing peace to reign”³⁹. In the view of a pastor, “mediative dialogue is as a result of the inability to resolve conflicts personally”⁴⁵. Since conflict is inevitable in any society, another pastor opined that “the best thing that a pastor can do when there is a conflict or schism in the church is for the pastor to mediate”¹³. A respondent thought that mediative dialogue would resolve conflicts among church members “...to a considerable extent if people are genuinely saved, and they follow the teachings of the Bible with high level of spiritual growth, easily mediative dialogue will resolve conflicts as people will not need to go beyond that level”³¹. Another respondent asserted that “African communal system is helping in the church where people can interfere in the affair or conflict situation of other people”⁴⁰. The African communal system was reiterated by a researcher when the researcher asserted that “most African societies emphasised social harmony as the overriding ideology of social control”⁶³. In support of this assertion, after studying African traditional systems of conflict resolution, a scholar

concluded that “African traditional environment (before colonialism and imposition of foreign legal systems) made it possible for conflicts to be easily resolved”⁶⁴.

A respondent asserted, “...conflicts are not mostly resolved through wars, but dialogue”⁴⁸. In reference to the Northern Ireland Troubles, a scholar put this assertion this way, “...jaw-jaw has proved better than war-war”⁶⁵. Most of the pastors interviewed agreed with this assertion and added that “apart from the teaching of the word of God and prayer”, mediative dialogue is the best and safest means of resolving conflicts as “other means will involve extra stress”^{22, 44}. In agreement with this, mediation and negotiation have been identified as the most common alternative dispute resolution methods used in churches, as affirmed by two scholars⁹. One of the respondents emphasised the importance of mediative dialogue because “there are some perceived ideas that may not be true” that the mediative dialogue sessions will unravel⁶⁶. Two scholars corroborated this by asserting that “...the main aim of all mediation and negotiation in the church was to find common ground among conflicting parties and to resolve such conflicts peacefully and without resorting to the use of litigation”⁹. Other two researchers also highlighted some benefits of dialogue in resolving conflicts among two or more conflicting parties⁶⁷. Among these benefits are:

- i. dialogue has the ability to attain enduring and maintainable peace;
- ii. dialogue builds links of understanding between the contending groups as they discover the things that they have in common;
- iii. in most cases, dialogue opens ways for meaningful exchange of ideas between the conflicting parties;
- iv. it strengthens common feelings and experiences;
- v. it also allows effective communication and interaction between the conflicting parties⁶⁷.

Inasmuch as “the level and nature of a conflict will determine what kind of means will be used to resolve it”, the pastors, however, have various means of using mediative dialogue

to resolve conflicts³². One of the pastors summarized these means thus: “To resolve conflicts, conflicting parties have to come to the round table and discuss their differences by airing their views. The mediator, then, helps the conflicting parties to move forward in resolving the conflict”⁶⁸. The various means of this “help” referred to in this study as “Means of Mediative Dialogue by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention” as shown in Figure 4.3 are highlighted below.

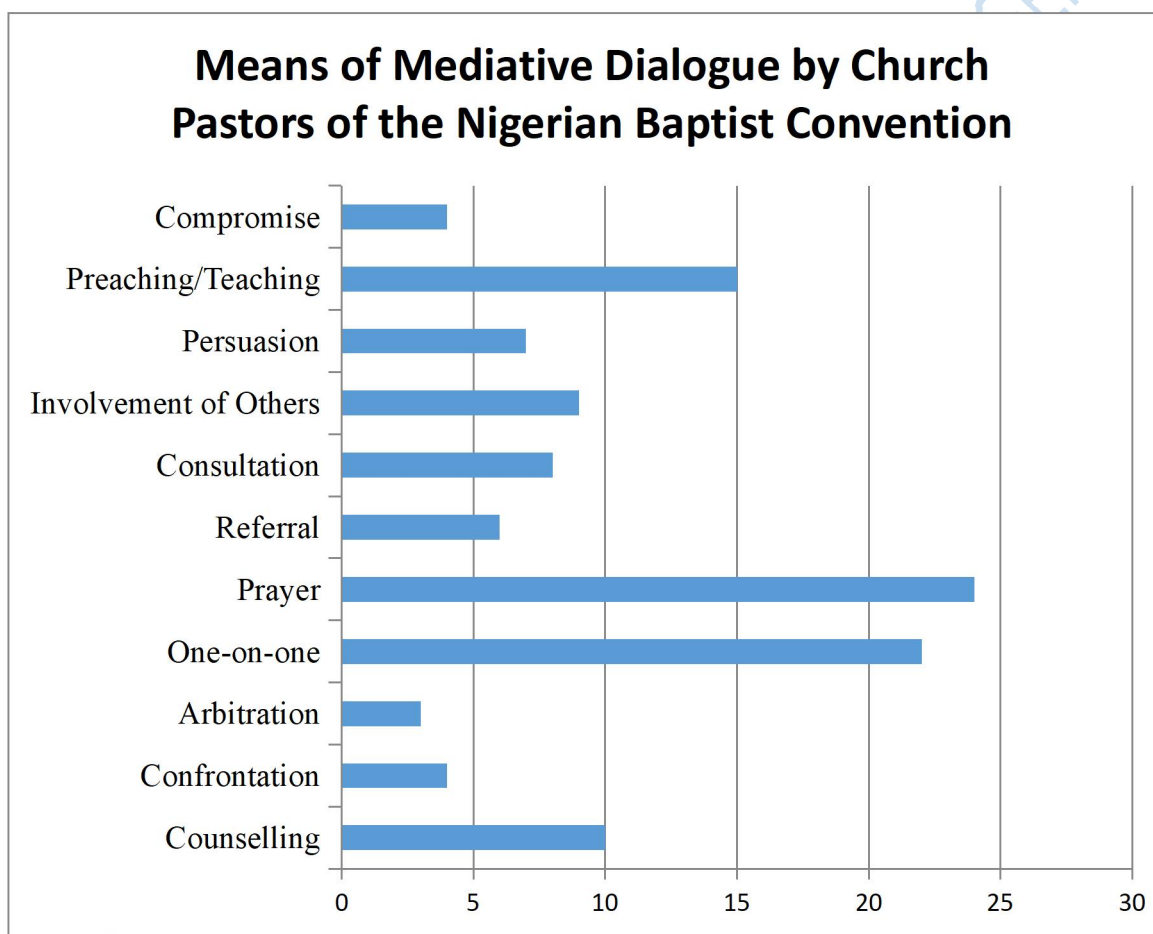


Figure 4.3: Means of Mediative Dialogue by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Source: Researcher’s Construct 2021

Almost all the respondents considered prayer as the first and the last thing to do in resolving conflicts among church members. The pastors believe that only God can handle any situation successfully (Psalm 37:4-5; 127:1-2; Proverbs 3:5-7). After settling the matter with God, the pastors believe that settling any matter with human beings will not be difficult. After asserting the importance of prayer in the ministry of a pastor, especially during a crisis, a renowned Baptist pastor advised other pastors thus: “You and the people you lead will face all kinds of crises. As a pastor, one of the most important things you can do is help them to pray during this time”⁶⁹ A researcher also corroborated this in a study⁷⁰.

Many pastors thought that preaching and teaching what the Bible teaches about peaceful coexistence and against conflicts is one of the best proactive ways to resolve conflicts. They argued that frequent preaching and teaching have been done from the pulpit would make it easy for the mediator to mediate in any conflict. The pastor may even resort to either preaching or teaching during the mediative dialogue sessions. More is discussed on this later.

A prominent means of resolving conflicts is one-on-one interaction with each of the conflicting parties. This is the initial step as identified by almost all the respondents. After the mediator has been informed about a conflicting issue, the mediator finds out some salient facts about the issue. These facts, as highlighted by some of the respondents, may include:

- a) who are the active and passive actors in the issue?
- b) what is the origin of the issue?
- c) what is the present stage of the issue?
- d) what are the interests of each of the conflicting parties in the issue?
- e) and many other applicable facts that have been reviewed in Chapter Two.

The mediator will then reach out to each of the actors and conflicting parties and hear their personal views of the issue. The mediator may at this stage resolve the conflict by using other

means like advice, counselling, persuasion or even confrontation by using his pastoral authority to rebuke the conflicting party (or parties) that is obvious that he is (or they are) at fault in the conflict. This latter option is referred to as arbitration, where the third party takes a unilateral decision to resolve a conflict, and the decision “is binding on the parties and enforceable by the courts”⁷¹.

After one-on-one interactions with each of the contending groups, the next thing that most of the respondents do is to organize mediative dialogue sessions where the mediator will bring the conflicting parties together to resolve the conflict. A scholar advised that “...during dialogue, the parties involved are expected to control their communication style and messages”¹⁸. This is because, as put by other scholars, “effective communication between individuals provides a foundation for preventing and resolving conflicts in a friendly and informal way”⁷².

One of the respondents emphasized the issue of effective communication between the mediator and the mediatees on one hand and between the mediatees on the other hand³¹. In support of this, some researchers opined, “When using a positive and constructive manner to resolve conflicts, they might bring reconciliation and to meet the individual needs of comfort, intimacy update and strengthen the faith, so that people can be more cooperation and overcome difficulties”¹². Likewise, another scholar asserted that “effective and respective communication with others enriches us by their insight, challenges us by their questions and deepens our knowledge of their grievances”¹⁸.

The mediative dialogue session may be once if the mediator could resolve the conflict at the first meeting. If not, there may be several sessions till the conflict is resolved, or there is a deadlock in the process. This is because there is an extent a mediator can go in mediating any conflict. A respondent reiterated this by affirming that “...one continues to mediate until a party is no longer interested in the mediative process, or not ready to resolve the conflict”¹¹.

In the words of a scholar, “a conflict resolution process was bound to fail if the disputants came to the conflict resolution table with uncooperative attitude, unforgiving spirit, and closed mind among other factors”²⁴. A scholar reiterated the importance of cooperation in resolving conflict when the scholar asserted, “...there must be cooperation which is essential to ensure task attainment and stability in life”²⁶⁵.

One major means of resolving conflicts among church members, as alluded to above, is counselling. Technically, a dictionary defines pastoral counselling as “the utilization by clergy of counselling and psychotherapeutic methods to enable individuals, couples and families to handle their personal crises and problems in living constructively”⁷³. The pastor counsels the church members on diverse kinds of issues (conflict issues inclusive). Some of the respondents asserted that after hearing the views of the contending groups in any conflict issue, they (the pastors) try to counsel the parties either individually or as a group on what to do to resolve the conflict. This counselling, according to the respondents, is based on the teachings of the Bible and the life experiences of the pastors. A researcher corroborated this in a study on the meaning, the relevance and the necessity of pastoral counselling⁷⁴. In fact, the concept of pastoral counselling is elaborate and beyond the scope of this study.

If the pastor or mediator discovers that he or she cannot handle a conflicting situation alone, the pastor can involve other people to either join the pastor in the process or take over the process. In the former instance, the mediator will be part of the mediative dialogue as other people (probably elderly and more respected people) join the mediator in the process. The latter instance is called referral, where the mediator refers the case to a more qualified or suitable mediator or higher authority (in the Baptist setting, the association, the state conference, if the association cannot resolve the case, or the national Convention). This is discussed more later. A document on mediation emphasised the importance of referral in support of this means of mediation⁷⁵.

Another help pastors render the people they are attempting to resolve their conflicts is leading the conflicting parties to reach a compromise. In the words of a respondent, “I make efforts to let the conflicting people reach a point of ‘give and take’”³⁹. In this situation, “the parties accept that there are times when one must be ready to set apart individual wants and needs in preference for others in order to find a ‘common ground’”⁷⁶. Some scholars have seen compromise as an essential element in negotiation and mediative dialogue⁷⁷. Although compromise as a means of conflict resolution strategy has not been giving desirable results in resolving religious conflicts in Nigeria, especially in interfaith situation⁷⁸, this means has been working for resolving conflicts among church members because “they share the common beliefs”³⁹. A scholar has emphasized this issue of “give and take” in asserting that “there is no conflict resolution strategy that can work in any situation where every parting in a conflict is insisting to have his/her way”⁷⁹.

As good as all these means may seem to be, it thought of a pastor that the mediatees should not be far in the distance from one another and both the pastor who wants to serve as the mediator and the conflicting parties have the time to go through the process. In the words of the pastor, “The meditative dialogue method is useful when the members are not distant members. It is also useful when the parties involved have the luxury of time to be together simultaneously”⁸⁰. However, some other pastors have inferred that social media is likely to solve the problems of the distance between the mediatees and the mediator, and the time factor, as all of them can engage in the use of social media and still be involved in other engagements. Two scholars have affirmed this by saying that “[social media] allows us to do things that were undreamt of only a few decades ago. Today, as we sit in our favorite coffee shop... we can chat, view, and exchange files, or play chess with our friends anywhere across the globe”⁸¹.

A respondent believed that “many pastors lack the skill to resolve conflict”³². Therefore, another respondent advised that to interfere in any conflicting situation effectively, “...one will need to read more and acquire more skill in resolving conflicts among church members”¹³. More knowledge through reading and skill acquisition may mean undergoing special courses in conflict resolution in general and mediative dialogue in particular. They may even be understudying more experienced and elderly pastors and learning from their wealth of experience in resolving conflicts. One of the Convention denominational leaders advised that pastors must not be afraid to seek referrals³². The referral may be to other more experienced and respected pastors. This is considered an informal referral. A formal referral is when an unresolvable issue is referred to the association. The laid-down system of resolving conflicts of the Nigerian Baptist Convention encourages this. The system is that when a conflict cannot be handled locally in the church, it should be referred to the association. If the association cannot handle it, it should be referred to the conference, and if the conference cannot handle it, refer it to the Convention. The Convention has a body that is seen as the supreme council. That is the Ministerial Board of the Convention⁸².

The Ministerial Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention emerged as a result of recurring conflicts in the Convention's churches serving as a body to mediate in these conflicts⁸². Apart from some specific roles of this board (especially on matters that have to do with pastors of the Convention) as stipulated in the constitutions of the Convention, the board is also given “the responsibility of managing and resolving conflict”⁸³. The Board is involved in resolving church conflict. Whenever there is a crisis in any Baptist local church, the board will “intervene in the crisis to make sure that the conflict is well managed”⁸².

With this laid down system of resolving conflicts, it is infrequent to see cases being taken to law courts for settlement among the members and churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The biblical injunction in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 also discourages litigations

among the members and churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Nonetheless, as a scholar asserts, “the Church that is supposed to be an epitome and shining example to society is battling with personality clashes and court cases among themselves”¹⁸.

The occurrences of legal tussles among Christians made one of the respondents to carry out his PhD research on finding an “alternative approach to lawsuit among believers in the church based on 1 Corinthians 6:1-11”⁸⁴. In the research, the respondent “provided remedy to the field findings using Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 which has eschatological, ethical, doctrinal and socio-political relevance to reduce lawsuit among believers”⁸⁴. The respondent concluded that “the local church should set up formidable conflict resolution body to be administered by competent people of integrity, who are just, fair and saturated with the fear of God. Such people must win the approval of other the people and be ready, to tell the truth without favouritism”⁸⁴. As part of his recommendations, the respondent also recommended that “the church should set up peace and arbitration body which comprises legal practitioners and mature believers from all denominations that aggrieved members of sister churches should consult to avoid embarrassment”⁸⁴. The Nigerian Baptist Convention has such a body known as the Ministerial Board referred to above. This respondent added, “...instead of litigation or lawsuit, and people should explore dialogue by inviting other elderly and more spiritual people to intervene in the conflict situation”⁸⁵.

Another respondent reiterated the importance of dynamism in using mediative dialogue in resolving conflicts⁶⁸. The respondent argued that many church members might not want to participate in a boring mediator-centred mediative dialogue sessions⁶⁸ actively. A scholar has suggested that stakeholders in dialogue as a means of conflict resolution should modify their ways of dialogue in order not to make the process “boring, rhetoric or mere exercise in futility”⁷⁹.

4.2.2. Research Question 2: In what ways does theology support mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members?

In almost every response of virtually all the respondents, two concepts are paramount: God and the Bible. Coincidentally, this study was conducted based on these two concepts as Baptist pastors have undisputable belief in God and their primary tool is the Bible. Thus, it is expected that none of the respondents would try to clarify who God is. They simply referred to God and freely cited many biblical references in their responses.

Every Baptist believes in one living and true God who is the Creator, Preserver and Ruler of the heavens and earth⁴¹. One of the articles of faith of the Nigerian Baptist Convention corroborates this:

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience, as one worthy of all honour, confidence and love (Psalm 83:18; 90:2; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; Jer. 10:10)⁸⁶.

God is referred to in the Bible as the God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20). The concept of God is central to the thoughts and beliefs of the Baptists. Many studies about this concept have been carried (and are still being carried) out. A broader explanation of this concept is beyond the scope of this study.

The second dominant concept is the Bible (also referred to as the Scriptures). This is another broad concept that its full explanation is beyond the scope of this study. However, the Baptists believe that the Bible is God's inspired written records (words) as revealed to man. To the Baptists, the Bible is the final authority in any matter of belief and practice⁸⁷. Another article of faith of the Nigerian Baptist Convention corroborates this:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. They comprise a collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which, as originally written does not only contain and convey the Word of God, but IS the very Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:20-21)⁸⁶.

As a result, almost all the pastors interviewed had one or more biblical bases for peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. One of the denominational leaders of the Convention asserted, “The Bible is a complete resource material for conflict resolution”³².

4.2.2.1. Some Biblical References in Support of Peaceful Coexistence and Mediative Dialogue

It is noteworthy that each respondent has many biblical references to refer to when asked about biblical bases for conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. One of the respondents simply affirmed, “...conflict resolution is Bible-based”⁴⁵. Many of the biblical teachings referred to by the respondents have been reviewed under different themes in Chapter Two. Of note among these biblical teachings is the process of resolving conflict amicably, as Jesus Christ highlighted it in Matthew 18:15-19. Furthermore, some of the biblical passages that emphasize the philosophy of peaceful coexistence as highlighted by many of the pastors interviewed are quoted here:

Romans 12:18: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

Romans 14:19: “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:18-20: “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

Matthew 5:23-25: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.”

Psalms 133: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.”

Matthew 5:38-42: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

John 13:35: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 Corinthians 6:1-7: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? I say this to your

shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?”⁸⁸

These biblical bases (reviewed in Chapter Two and highlighted above) can be referred to as the foundation of the theology of peace in general and/or theology of mediative dialogue in particular.

4.2.2.2. Some Theological Thoughts on Peaceful Coexistence and Mediative Dialogue

Apart from the cited biblical passages on peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution, some of the pastors interviewed also provided some theological thoughts on peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution in general and mediative dialogue in particular. One pastor opined, “God knows that it will not be easy for people to be at peace with one another, hence, the biblical injunction to strive to be at peace with one another”³⁷. The implication of this is that God knows the nature of man and the relationship of mankind among one another. God knows that conflicts are inevitable, and that being at peace will not be easy. Hence, God gave many injunctions on how people can live at peace with one another and resolve conflicts if they arise. To corroborate this, an international devotional writer who is also an American Baptist pastor wrote:

God wants you to live at peace with everyone. Why? Because unresolved conflict has three devastating effects in life.

First, it blocks your fellowship with God. When you’re out of harmony with others, you can’t be in harmony with God. When you’re distracted by conflict with other people, you can’t have a clear connection with God. The Bible says, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar” (1 John 4:20 NLT).

Second, unresolved conflict hinders your prayers. Over and over again the Bible says that when your life is characterized by conflict, sin, and disharmony, your prayers are

blocked. “It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore” (Isaiah 59:2 NLT).

Third, unresolved conflict hinders your happiness. You can’t be happy and in conflict at the same time. When conflict comes in through the front door, happiness goes out the back door⁸⁹.

For this reason, pastors should be ready to promote peaceful coexistence among their church members and immediately resolve any conflict that may arise among them, especially through mediative dialogue.

In addition, God, the Creator of man is seen as God of peace who “has always stood for the peace of man. When man was alone [in the Garden of Eden], God created a woman for his well being [Genesis 2:18-24]. When man sinned, God immediately took a decision to restore man to the lost relationship with Him [Genesis 3]”³⁹. This concept is referred to as the concept of reconciliation. The concept abounds throughout the Bible. Having reconciled men unto Himself, God gave them “the ministry of reconciliation” to reconcile other men unto God and to reconcile men to men (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). This is a key concept that propels many Christians to live in peace with other people and be ready to resolve conflicts quickly. When it comes to the issue of reconciliation, the offended person is expected to take the first step in reaching out to the offender (see Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3).

One issue that has been reviewed in Chapter Two is the importance of forgiveness. This is another pivotal issue in the Christian life. A pastor argued that mediative dialogue would be complex where the contending groups are not ready to forgive one another¹³. Another pastor advised, “Allow people to offend you and let them go away with it”¹¹. Nonetheless, this may be difficult to apply because of the human egocentric nature.

Another issue that has been reviewed in Chapter Two is the relationship of love to the peaceful co-existence of people in society. A respondent specifically referred to this⁹⁰. In the respondent's words, “Genuine love among the church members is vital to their peaceful co-

existence”⁹⁰. Living in love has been referred to above by other respondents with reference to some verses of the Bible. However, as reviewed in Chapter Two, there are different types of love. The best of these types is agape love. A scholar thought that “...a proper understanding, appreciation of and adherence of Paul’s teachings of agape by Nigerian Christians as it relates to peaceful co-existence with people of different or varied callings could help in restoring to Nigeria communities the peaceful and harmonious community lifestyles for which they were known and praised”⁹¹. Against this backdrop, a theologian asserted, “...if the society will progress today, there must be genuine love for one another.... therefore peace, harmony and progress [should] prevail in our society”⁹².

A respondent referred to the doctrine of Trinity where the three Persons in the Godhead united together to do things harmoniously²². The respondent opined that if people could collaborate like the Persons in the Godhead, living in peace would not be a challenge, and conflict resolution in case of misunderstanding would be easy to accomplish²². Nonetheless, it has been observed that the doctrine of the Trinity is a controversial one⁹³. While many theologians have attempted, and are still attempting, to explain this controversy, such an attempt is beyond the scope of this research.

As reiterated by a respondent, living in peace with other people is a glimpse of heaven and rehearsal of how to live there⁹⁴. This respondent referred to some biblical verses that present heaven as a place where predator animals and their prey will be living together in harmony (Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25). As heaven-bound and citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), Christians are expected to live peaceful even with people their adversaries⁹⁴. Two theologians supported this view. In their words,

The church believes that the Christian has a dual citizen; here on earth and in heaven. As a citizen of this earth, the Christian needs to be patriotic and work for the development, growth and the success of this earth. [Therefore,] ...the Christian must take this world seriously because it is a gate way or pathway to eternal life in heaven. This earthly life is preparation for life in heaven⁹⁵.

A respondent viewed God as the chief Mediator who is ready to dialogue with people³⁷. In Isaiah 1:18, God says, “come let us reason together” This respondent opined that “as children of God, Christians should imbibe the habit of dialoguing with others especially when there is any misunderstanding”³⁷. A scholar corroborated this and explained further that “...at this point, dialogue is not meant for debate rather, it is a process of mutual empowerment between the aggrieved parties who have conflicting interests and claims”¹⁸.

The pastors interviewed mentioned many instances of people in the Bible involved in a form or the other of mediative dialogue. In the Old Testament, Abraham was one of the people that used mediative dialogue in the Bible. There were conflicts between his herders and the herders of Lot, his nephew. To resolve these conflicts, Abraham called Lot and offered a lasting solution to Lot that ended the conflicts (Genesis 13:1-13). Moses served as the judge of the Israelites as they were moving out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Moses used to sit down and listen to cases of conflicts that the Israelites brought to him. Moses would settle these cases for them one after the other. Jethro, his father-in-law, gave Moses a better way of doing this by advising Moses to appoint leaders among the people who would serve as judges. Only cases that these leaders could not solve were brought to Moses as the final authority (Exodus 18). This method, as advised by Jethro, is also known as a delegation of duties. Other people in the history of the Israelites also served as their judges, resolving conflicts as part of their duties. Notable among them were Deborah and Barak (Judges 4) and Samuel, who had the habit of moving “from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. But he always returned to Ramah, for his home was there. There he judged Israel” (1 Samuel 7:16-17)⁹⁶. King Solomon was a classic example of a mediator when he resolved a conflict that two women brought to him (1 Kings 3:16-28).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is referred to as “the mediator of the new covenant” (see Hebrews 9:15; 1 Timothy 2:5). A scholar has asserted that the doctrine of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ is central to Christianity⁹⁷. The doctrine is profound and beyond the scope of this research. Nonetheless, the mediatorship is between God and man. Jesus Christ reconciled man back to God by His sacrificial death on the cross⁹⁸. Apart from the procedure that Jesus recommended in Matthew 18 (that has been reviewed in Chapter Two) and mentioned by almost all the respondents, two other cases stand out as examples of conflict resolution in the New Testament. The first one is what is termed as the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. In the conference, the early church leaders came together, listened to the story of each side of the conflicting parties, and came up with a resolution. The second typical conflict resolution in the New Testament is recorded in the short book of Philemon. There was a conflict between Philemon and one of his servants – Onesimus – that made the latter run away. Onesimus had an encounter with Paul, and Paul needed to write the short epistle to Philemon mediating between them.

4.2.3. Research Question 3: Of what nature and types are the conflicts managed by church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

4.2.3.1. Nature and Types of Conflicts managed by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

One Convention denomination leader declared that “pastors are like general practitioners who are expected to know almost everything that has to do with any human relationship”³⁹. Another Convention denomination leader asserted that “pastors face many conflict situations that are imaginable in any relationship”⁹⁹. These two assertions, with many comments of pastors interviewed as they responded to the Research Question above, brought about many nature and types of conflicts that pastors manage in their churches.

These nature and types of conflicts “vary because of the nature of each church”⁶. A respondent believed that many churches are multi-cultural, with people of different cultures and backgrounds as members. So, there is bound to be conflicts in such churches¹⁰⁰. Two scholars corroborated this by opined that African societies are “largely pluralistic and heterogeneous, with many states comprising more than one ethnic nationality”¹⁰¹. Nigeria, in particular, “is being a plural society is mostly divided. These cleavages include linguistic, religious, cultural, regional, or sometimes ethnic in nature”¹⁰². It is, therefore, recommended that tolerance and mutual respect are paramount to unity in any society¹⁰¹.

As cited in Chapter Two, a scholar has summarized all types of conflicts managed by Baptist pastors in an empirical study¹⁰³. In another study from east Africa, seven different types of conflict occur in churches¹⁰⁴. These include: “inter-personal, intra-personal, ideological, moral, health, financial and cultural conflicts”¹⁰⁴. Figure 4.4 gives a graphic representation of these nature and types of conflicts indicated by the pastors. Some of these are explained briefly below¹⁰⁵.

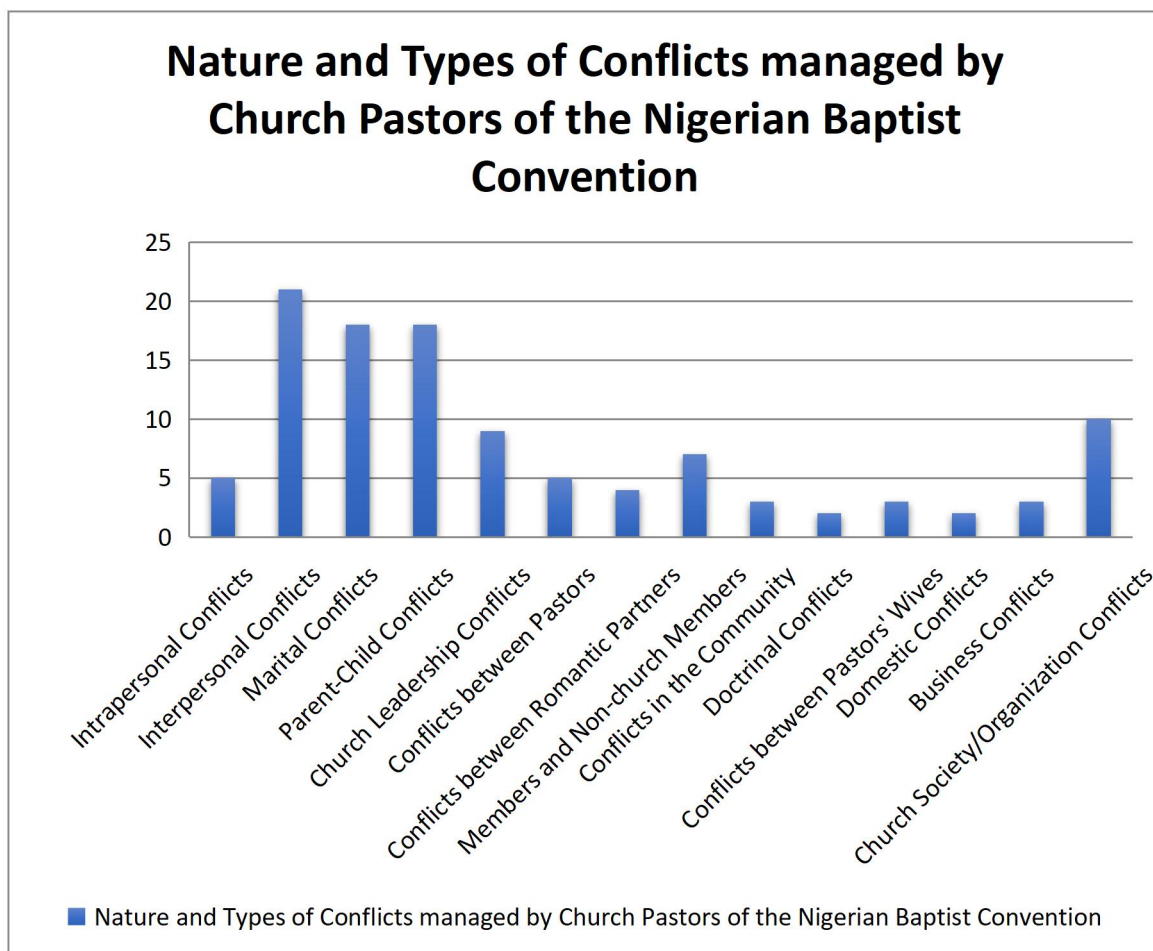


Figure 4.4: Nature and Types of Conflicts managed by church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

I. Interpersonal Conflicts

As some scholars asserted, "...once men began relating with each other and started life in a communal way, disagreement became inevitable as a result of the differences and sentiments inherent in men"¹⁰⁶. These differences and sentiments become interpersonal conflicts that most respondents considered most frequent conflicts among their church members and with other non-church members. All the other types of conflicts (except intrapersonal conflicts) are interpersonal. According to some researchers, in the workplace, an interpersonal conflict is "a prevalent and consequential stressor, leading employees to feel

disconnected, interact negatively, and show poor job performance”¹⁰⁷. Interpersonal conflicts happen between members of churches and, at times, non-church members. Some researchers have summarily defined an interpersonal conflict as “...an interaction of interdependent people who sense disagreement and opposing interests, incompatibility and the possibility of interference, and negative emotion from others”¹².

Interpersonal conflicts are caused mainly by “differences in the expression of interest, point of view, and opinion”¹⁰⁸. In the words of two scholars, interpersonal conflicts involve “value and/or personality differences arising from disagreements between individuals [and they] might take various forms and manifest at various levels”⁷². Some other researchers believed that interpersonal conflicts have “become one of the most important concerns of researchers and writers especially those who are studying organizational behaviour”¹². This has made a researcher conclude, based on a recent study, that positive emotion will likely reduce interpersonal conflicts¹⁰⁹. The ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts will also prevent loneliness and the burden of building a relationship with other people, as revealed in a recent study¹¹⁰.

II. Marital Conflicts

This type of conflict is one of the conflicts in a family. It can also be referred to as “interparental conflict”¹¹¹. Although marriage is considered to be “one of the most important events in a person’s life journey”, marital conflicts happen between husbands and wives¹⁰⁸. Many reasons can make marital conflicts happen. Among these reasons, as highlighted by some scholars, are: “incompatibility of interests, opinions, personal goals, children’s education, leisure time for the couple, finances ... and the personality of each spouse”¹¹². The other type is parent-child conflicts that are discussed later. Both categories of conflicts are prominent among church members of respondents. Some researchers opined that it is not easy

to live “a married life with commitments, challenges, and all its dynamics”¹⁰⁸. So, marital conflicts are bound to happen. Unfortunately, these marital conflicts or interparental conflicts usually negatively affect the children in the family, as established in two recent studies^{111, 113}. While some respondents freely gave instances of these conflicts among their church members, some respondents are cautious in going into details of the conflicts because the respondents considered the instances as something they should not disclose to a third party.

One of the bones of contention among many couples, as mentioned by some of the respondents, is sex in marriage. Some researchers corroborated this in a study⁷⁷. Another related issue is marital infidelity that two scholars referred to as “social conflicts caused by adultery by married people and fornication by the yet to be married was also another area of concern in the church”⁹. A researcher has found out through a recent study some “risk factors that cause infidelity in married women, including unresolved conflict, lack of intimacy, ineffective communication, lowquality time, and unfulfilled expectations from partners”¹¹⁴.

The occurrence of marital conflicts made a researcher carry out a study on “marital instability and conflict” using Yoruba Christian Couples in the North West of England as case studies with particular reference to the position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on marriage¹¹⁵. The researcher concluded that marriage “will always present new and complex challenges that reflect the existential journey of those involved irrespective of their location, social status or cultural and religious backgrounds”¹¹⁵.

Another researcher specifically researched how social media can be used to resolve marital conflicts¹¹⁶. Although the researcher discovered that technological tools in general and social media, in particular, are contributing to conflicts among married couples, the researcher also discovered that “proper and adequate use of [social media] can make a significant positive impact in the life of married couple [thereby] preventing marital

conflict”¹¹⁶. He, therefore, recommended more education on the proper use of social media among married couples¹¹⁶.

A Baptist pastor who is also a marriage counsellor opined that marital conflicts are inevitable in every marriage relationship¹¹⁷. In the pastor’s words, “[marital] couples who seek to transform rather than ‘manage’ or ‘settle’ their conflicts usually become more intimate.... Effective conflict transformation in marriage is a combination of grace, character and skills”¹¹⁷. The pastor explained further how couples can understand conflicts, what conflict does to a marriage relationship, what unhappy couples do wrong, requirements for conflict transformation in marriage, essential relational skills for conflict transformation in marriage, and how to transform and maximize conflicts marriage¹¹⁷. The approach of this Baptist pastor is in line with the views of an expert in conflict transformation:

A transformational approach recognizes that conflict is a normal and continuous dynamic within human relationships. Moreover, conflict brings with it the potential for constructive change. Positive change does not always happen, of course. As we all know too well, many times conflict results in long-standing cycles of hurt and destruction. But the key to transformation is a proactive bias toward seeing conflict as a potential catalyst for growth¹¹⁸.

Another renowned Baptist pastor reiterated this by differentiating between reconciliation and resolution¹¹⁹. According to him,

There’s a very important difference. Reconciliation means to re-establish the relationship. Resolution means to resolve every issue by coming to agreement on everything. You’ll discover there are some things you’re never going to agree on. I don’t care if you both love the Lord and are both dramatically in love with each other—there are some things you’re never going to agree on simply because God has wired us differently. You’re not going to agree with everything your mate believes or thinks. But you can disagree without being disagreeable. That’s called wisdom. It is more rewarding to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a relationship¹¹⁹.

In the view of a researcher as a remedy to marital conflicts, especially divorce, “The ability to find equilibrium between being an individual and being a part of a couple is crucial

to the success of the marriage”¹²⁰. A respondent thought that an antidote of marital conflict is pre-marital counselling⁹⁰. Some researchers referred to this as “pre-marriage education”¹⁰⁸. The aim of this education or counselling is to consciously and formally prepare the would-be couples to what they would encounter in a marriage relationship and how to confront the challenges of marital life¹²¹. In a study, a researcher discussed the necessity of the obligation of pastors to minister to and counsel would-be couples before they get married to curb marital conflicts and established that, with effective premarital pastoral counselling programmes, it is likely for the couple to decide the nature and quality of their relationship before marriage¹²². Similarly, because of their pastoral training as counsellors, pastors can identify the factors that can improve steadiness in future marriages of church members if these factors are addressed before marriage¹²². Lastly, the researcher concluded that “an investment made intentionally in terms of time, finance or human resources towards ensuring that marriage remains intact is worth it because marriage is seen as the primary means by which family relationships are made possible for raising children who would perpetuate the human race on earth”¹²². The Nigerian Baptist Convention also stipulates how to do premarital counselling in its guideline on policies and practices⁸⁶.

III. Conflicts in Romantic Relationships (especially among Unmarried Young People)

One of the interpersonal conflicts related to marital conflicts, as identified by some respondents, is conflicts in romantic relationships between unmarried or about-to-be married young people. Some scholars have classified this type of conflict as “the existence of dialectic opinion, views, belief, and ideology, which may generate disagreement between the romantic partners”¹²³. These scholars studied how social media is contributing to this type of

conflict and concluded that fidelity is vital in such relationships¹²³. Another possible solution to this is pre-marital counselling that has been mentioned above.

IV. Parent-Child Conflicts

It has been noted by some scholars that “Parent–child relationships change during late adolescence and early adulthood and require ‘realignments’ in the face of changing needs, roles, and expectations”¹²⁴. Therefore, some other scholars have these to say about parent-child conflicts:

Parent–offspring conflict can be defined as a state in which parents and children stand in opposition to one another. The source of conflict between parents and children can vary significantly from relatively trivial issues such as clothing choice or bedtime routine to very serious issues relating to the safety and well-being of the child. One of the principal goals of parenting is the socialization of the child – the process by which parents instill in their child the values and behaviors appropriate to a member of society¹²⁵.

In corroboration with the above views and as revealed by many respondents, an issue that mainly causes conflicts in a parent-child relationship is the way the parents want to bring up their children. Some children feel that the generational gap between them and their parents is making them disagree with their parents. A respondent cited an instance of a parent that wanted to guide her daughter on whom to marry or not. The daughter had a contrary opinion resulting in a conflict that the pastor had to intervene. Two researchers confirmed this in their study and asserted that “teenagers’ values and need to attain freedom from their parents is a cause of conflict”¹²⁶. The researchers thereby concluded in the study “that lack of mutual understanding of intention between teenagers and their parents is the major factor generating conflict between them”¹²⁶. They also gave these recommendations to reduce parent-child conflicts:

1. There should be peer education through different channels such as television, radio, social media, etc on the causes and effect of conflict between parent and children as it will help them to avoid its occurrence.
2. Parents should be enlightened on the need to let their children know the reason why they made certain decisions which they may perceived not suitable for them.
3. Teenagers should be educated by their mass media on the need to obey their parents' decision and follow their guidance as no reasonable parents will lead their children astray.
4. Churches and other religion group in the country should regularly organized teen conferences where teens can be oriented against any act that brings violence and conflict in the home.
5. Focussed group discussion on conflict management should be done by teachers and churches on conflict resolution in the home. This will help to reduce the rate of conflict occurrence between teenagers and parents¹²⁶.

A respondent opined that the access to digital technology by present-day children is making parenting more difficult as the children are being exposed to the use of technological tools both at home and in school⁶⁶. A researcher supported this opinion by asserting that

...technological advancement in terms of digital media has presented a wide range of new challenges and altered the landscape of parenting. One can even imagine that such advancement of technology would have enhanced the daunting task of parenting, but the use of digital media in the home has further complicated the already difficult tasks for parents¹²⁷.

There has been a further study on the challenges parents and their children face in communicating with one another, especially in relation to social media. The study concludes that attaining knowledge, training in conflict resolution skills, and identifying the factors connected to conflicts between parents and youngsters can help parents and herald the reduction in parent-adolescent conflicts and improve the quality of parent-adolescent communication about the use of social media¹²⁸. There was another study on parenting style and social media use where it was concluded that the "supportive, caring and flexible attitude of parents produce morally, psychologically, mentally and healthy children"¹²⁹. In another

study about how and the extent to which parents intervene in mobile and social media use by their teens, it was discovered that the parent-child relationship had not been negatively affected by parental interference in their teens' use of social media¹³⁰. However, it was recommended by the researchers of the study that "parents should endeavour to keep pace with" the new technological spaces of their teens¹³⁰.

V. Church Leadership Conflicts

Church leadership conflicts are other major conflicts in most churches, as revealed by many respondents. In discussing leadership conflict in the church, a researcher opined that "leadership is crucial to the survival of any organization because it can either make or mar the organization", and church leadership is not exempt from conflicts³⁶. Church leadership conflicts happen in various forms. They may be the issue of who to call (or be engaged) to become the church's pastor. They may be the issue of whom to select or elect into a leadership position (or as workers in the church) at the beginning of the year (or anytime there is a vacancy for such position). They may be the issue of selection or election of deacons who are considered the other set of ordained people in a Baptist church (though not theologically trained but selected or elected to help the pastors) apart from the pastors who are theologically trained. They may be disciplinary action against an erring leader (including pastors) in the church. They may be the administrative style of the leader. It may even be a "boardroom conflict" – conflict between the church's leadership where "people are not ready to work together because of different personalities and interests"⁶. They may even be between members and church leadership like committees, advisory council (or church council), diaconate (body of deacons), church pastors, and others. The conflicts are multifaceted¹⁰⁰. A scholar affirmed this multifaceted dimension of church leadership conflicts when the scholar said:

Conflict is also a serious issue in the church, if not among the rank and file, then among the leaders and would-be leaders. Conflict, in form of cold war, is even worse among Christian leaders. Very sad to write but very true that many of us have failed our master and Lord along this line with unnecessary envies, black mailing and gossips, and many times, writing strongly worded letters against another Christian brother to destroy him but God through Jesus Christ not destroying such individual, lying against one another in the attempt to destroy another before the Chief Executive officer or president of a Christian institution. We see these happening every day¹³¹.

As revealed in a study, this type of conflict is prevalent in the Christ's Apostolic Church, Worldwide, and many factors causes it¹⁸. Nevertheless, as proven by a researcher in another study, church leadership conflicts have become an impetus for church growth in Nigeria, as "the most [church leadership] conflicts in the Nigerian Church have become avenues for the spread of the gospel"³⁶. To curtail this type of conflict in the church, the researcher in another study gave these recommendations:

...church leaders must see leadership as opportunity to serve. It is not a do-or-die affair. The Christian leader must not see himself as winner takes all, but must learn that the work of the ministry is a collective responsibility. Therefore the relationship between the top leader and other leaders should not be servant to master relationship, but one that must co-exist for the common good of the whole church¹³².

VI. Conflicts among Church Members

Some respondents gave instances of settling conflicts between their church members. The respondents argued that they must intervene in such conflicts because the church exists to promote peaceful coexistence among church members. A theologian has highlighted some of the most frequent conflict issues among church members¹³³. According to him, these are (but are not limited to):

- i. change the time of the corporate worship;
- ii. complaints about the length of the worship services;
- iii. disagreement on how to deal with an erring pastor or staff member;

- iv. lack of clarity and disagreement about who makes decisions; and
- v. conflict over worship style¹³³.

In his view, another theologian opined that conflicts among church members could be caused by pride, spiritual and emotional immaturity, change and inflexibility, abuses of power, church politics, unclear authority, or personality differences¹³⁴. All these causes are summarized into only three causes:

- (a) theology, doctrine, or other ideal issues (which they saw as cultural issues);
- (b) resources, such as money, personnel or physical plant (seen as economic issues);
and
- (c) church authority (seen as political or administrative issues)¹³⁵.

Interestingly, a researcher singled out just one cause for conflict among church members: anxiety¹²⁰. Based on some studies the researcher carried out using “Bowen Family Systems Theory,” the researcher concluded that ineffective management of anxiety within the church as a system is the leading cause of conflicts among the church members¹³⁶. It has to be admitted here that the said studies were carried out in some American churches¹³⁶. The validity of this position in Nigerian churches will be a subject for further study.

In order to curb the escalation of conflicts among church members, two theologians opined,

Only a comprehensive revamping of how we think about ourselves and others in conflict, both as individuals and groups, along with shifts in our church cultures will “transform” conflict. The goal is not to get all Christians to agree on everything, but to stop the namecalling, the blaming, the talking past one another, the hatred and spiritual skewering of one another. Our vision is to learn to disagree, perhaps even on matters of truth, in ways that embody the gospel of Truth and set an example for other communities¹³⁷.

VII. Conflicts between Church Members and Non-church Members

Furthermore, some respondents gave instances of settling conflicts between their church members and others that are not their church members. They argued that many non-church members deliberately involve the pastors in the conflict resolution because they (the non-church members) believe that the church members involved in the conflicts would respect the opinion of their church pastors. In their study, some researchers affirmed that “when two different religious systems exist in one community, the tendencies of conflicts of socioreligious, ideological, physical, and even political characters will arise between them”¹³⁸. These researchers gave a biblical foundation of these differences as the religious leaders of the days of Jesus Christ – “the founder of Christianity” – used to have conflicts with Him¹³⁸. They further chronicled the differences between Christianity and the traditional religion of the Igbos of eastern Nigeria that commonly cause religious conflicts among the adherents of the two religions¹³⁸. At times, these conflicts comprise “... those of a man practicing a new religious system, amid a traditional order that has not yet disappeared [and this] has also led to syncretism in the people’s culture and has given rise to disintegration and lack of unity among the people”¹³⁸. Other scholars opined that the inability of church members to have cordial relationships is a failure on their part to impact the society positively¹⁰⁴. Their words: “The whole purpose of the Christian faith is to encourage and challenge people to improve their lives; the more Christians do not seek genuine opportunities to interact positively with non-Christians, the more their religious impact on the larger society remains only a dream”¹⁰⁴.

VIII. Church Society/Organization Conflicts

These may also be interdepartmental or intergroup conflicts. Some scholars have identified some causes of intergroup conflicts¹³⁹. These causes, according to the findings of the scholars, include, but are not limited to Mere membership and social identification,

Reputation and (in)direct reciprocity, Attachment and prosociality, Status ranking, Out-group threat, Carrying-capacity stress¹³⁹. Some churches have what is called a “society” – a group of people that come together to form an association for social purposes in the church. In some cases, these church societies also exist for healthy rivalry in developing the church. There are many organizations in a local Baptist church. There are missionary organizations like Men’s Missionary Union (MMU) for married men, Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) for married women, youth fellowship/organization for young adults, Baptist Student Fellowship (BSF) for students, Royal Ambassadors (RA) for young boys and men, Lydia Auxiliary for unmarried ladies, Girls’ Auxiliary (GA) for young girls, and Sunbeam Band for children under the age of 10. There are other teaching/training organizations like Sunday School, Disciples’ Lifestyle, Baptismal Class, Discipleship, and the like. Other organizations (departments or units) have to do with activities in the church like the choir, drama unit, evangelism unit, decoration unit, technical unit, and the like.

There are bound to be conflicts within and between these societies, organizations and units in the church that pastors resolve from time to time. Many of the respondents confirmed this. In a study, a scholar asserted, “Intra-church conflicts have been more frequent than inter-church conflicts because members and leaders of one church have more common interests and are therefore more prone to conflicts than members and leaders of different churches in spite of belonging to one Christian denomination”¹⁴⁰.

IX. Conflicts between Pastors

Conflicts between pastors happen where there is more than one pastor in a church either in a multi-staff ministry setting or when a pastor is just a member of the church but working in another place like being a ministerial officer or denominational leader at the headquarters of the Convention or a lecturer at a Bible college or even a university¹⁴¹. One of

the respondents cited an instance of a conflict sometime ago between the church pastor and another trained and ordained pastor who is just a member of the church but a lecturer in a university. It took the intervention of some elderly pastors at the association level to resolve the conflict. In the multi-staff ministry setting, there is a “senior” pastor who is considered the pastor in charge and other “associate” pastors that are saddled with the responsibility of an aspect (or aspects) of the church activities or arms. For instance, the associate pastor may be the minister of music, minister of youth and teenagers, children minister, minister of education, and the like. Like in interpersonal relationships, conflicts are bound to happen between these pastors. A researcher opined that power struggles between pastors aid ideological differences¹⁴⁰. Another scholar corroborated this in a study²⁴. One of the scholar's conclusions is that pastors should have better education on interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution²⁴.

X. Conflicts between Pastors' Wives

Conflicts between pastors' wives are closely related to conflicts between pastors. It may even be a spillover of conflicts between pastors. The influence of pastors' wives in their husbands' ministries and, by extension, conflicts between the pastors' wives on one hand and pastors' wives and other women in the church on the other hand, is reiterated by a scholar in a study¹⁴⁰. Another scholar, highlighting the roles of pastors' wives, opined that the wives of pastors could be “the backbone of their husbands' success or failure” and thereby add to the conflicts the pastors are handling.¹⁴² This view was corroborated by another researcher in a study on the role of a pastor's spouse in church growth¹⁴³. The extent to the pastors' wives contribute to the conflicts managed by their husbands is another subject for further study.

XI. Intrapersonal Conflicts

Intrapersonal conflicts are unique conflicts that take place in a person and “perhaps the most difficult form of conflict to analyze and manage”¹⁵. Most of the time, they have to do with a crisis of decision making or personal challenges. A researcher thought that this type of conflict (referred to as “inner struggles”) frequently “emerges as result of a personality trait that is contrary to the desires of an individual who is seeking to change and adopt the values of the church teachings”⁴⁹. It has been asserted, as quoted above, that this kind of conflict is “...perhaps the most difficult form of conflict to analyze and manage”¹⁵. So, it was the opinion of two scholars that,

Cases of intrapersonal conflicts were assigned to selected individuals in leadership with training and experience in psychotherapy and doctrinal teachings. It would be easier for such trained and experienced mediators and counsellors to handle cases of conflict as these cases were sensitive and required expertise and skill which could only be acquired through training or experience⁹.

XII. Doctrinal Conflicts

Doctrinal conflicts have to do with interpreting and applying some biblical teachings, beliefs, and practices¹⁴⁴. Two scholars corroborate this: “The church dealt with religious conflicts which related to issues of church doctrine violation”⁹. Another researcher went into church history and asserted, “The era of the church fathers was not free from the menace of leadership conflict as they were faced mainly with the challenge of doctrinal differences”¹³². The researcher went further also to affirm that “one of the main causes of Leadership conflict in the Church today is Doctrinal Differences”¹³². The Baptist beliefs in the priesthood of all believers and the soul competency of every believer make this type of conflict thrive in many Baptist churches^{41, 40}. Another doctrinal issue that causes conflicts in some churches is polygamy¹⁴⁴. A researcher thought that more sound teachings of the words of God would reduce this type of conflict¹⁴⁴.

XIII. Conflicts in the Community

One of the roles of the church in society, especially in the local community, is to meet the physical and other social needs of the community¹⁴⁵. A theologian put it this way: “the functions of the church include social concern which is the basis of social works that enthrone peace and justice in a corrupt society”⁵⁰. A researcher asserts that “faith-based organizations have good background and operate extensively in communities in provision of social services...”¹⁴⁶. In line with this, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, as a faith-based organisation, has a Social Ministry Department that is saddled with responsibilities of overseeing the activities of the Convention and its churches in meeting the physical and other social needs of people in the society¹⁴⁷. Another researcher highlighted the vision and mission of this department as: “to empower believers in the need of task of meeting social needs to empower the less privileged to become self-reliant”¹⁴⁸.

In attempts to fulfil this role as local churches, there are instances of conflicts between some churches and their immediate communities in the form of misunderstandings and rancour. As cited by a respondent, one of such rancour grew from misunderstandings, mismanagements and abuses in the relationship between the church and the community, especially in relation to the provision of social amenities like pipe-borne water to the community by the church¹³. In spite of these misunderstandings, the church is encouraged to look at ways it will have more positive physical and social impacts on the immediate community it is situated¹⁴⁹. In the opinion of a researcher, “there is a need on the part of the Nigerian Baptists Convention at all levels, the local churches, associations, conferences, and the convention itself to inject more funds into the [social] ministries for the pursuit of [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals] for better performance”¹⁴⁸.

XIV. Business Conflicts

Business conflicts (organizational conflicts or workplace conflicts) are a state of disharmony instigated by the real or apparent opposition of needs, values and interests between people working together. Organizational conflicts are inevitable “in any area as long as there are people” in such organizations¹⁵⁰. Some scholars have identified eight causes of business conflict (or conflict in the workplace). They are conflicting needs, conflicting styles, conflicting perceptions, conflicting goals, conflicting pressures, conflicting roles, different personal values, and unpredictable policies¹⁵¹. In the opinion of another scholar, “...conflicts occur in organizations as a result of competition for supremacy, leadership style, scarcity of common resources, etc”¹⁵².

Business conflicts have to do with business issues among business partners that are members of the church, or one partner is a member while the other is a non-member of the church. There may be an inability to manage investments or an inability to repay loans. As admitted by one respondent, at times, pastors are involved in the resolution of such conflicts because of the general belief that the pastors are respected men/women of God that the conflicting parties would listen to⁶. Considering many possible conflict resolution strategies in resolving business conflicts based on some biblical guidelines, two researchers concluded that “conflict must be managed (resolved) to achieve consensus, that is, a broad agreement that minimizes the problem and enables the organization to function effectively”¹⁵³. Among other recommendations in resolving organisational conflicts and in relation to mediative dialogue, two other scholars recommended that “there should be adequate interaction and dialogue in conflict resolution”¹⁵². A researcher also corroborated this by asserting, “Dialogue as a form of communication becomes necessary and crucial prior to issuing policies and regulations in the organization, especially if they affect other interests”¹⁵⁰. Furthermore,

another scholar observed that “possible ways of handling conflict situation in an organization is by constant dialogue”¹⁵⁴.

XV. Domestic Conflicts

Domestic conflicts have to do with physical domestic violence expressed against a family member. A respondent specifically referred to this and explained that he has intervened in some cases where the husband physically rough handled his wife. One of the activities of Ecumenism for Development and Peace Initiative (EDAPI), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is the campaign against domestic violence¹⁵⁵.

4.2.3.2. Conflict Management Mechanisms Adopted by Church Pastors

The Nigerian Baptist Convention, as a faith-based organization, has been involved in many forms of conflict resolution and transformation “for a long time though the Convention does not call these forms conflict resolution or any technical term”²³¹. Some studies have been carried out to confirm this^{82, 144}. As affirmed earlier, many of these procedures are based on some biblical injunctions.

A researcher has recorded how conflict can be handled constructively and creatively¹⁵⁶. Likewise, some scholars have elucidated some traditional ways of resolving conflicts in Ibadan and other parts of Africa^{157, 158}. However, as asserted by a researcher, there are conflicts “in every human society, the nature, analysis and resolution of conflict had differed from society to society”¹⁵⁹. So, each respondent has his/her unique ways of resolving conflicts, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence in his/her church. Some of the ways have been discussed under 4.2.1.3. Mediative Dialogue above. Here are more discussions on some

of the identified means. The discussions here and the ones under the said section above are interrelated.

As noted by one of the Convention leaders, every individual in the conflict is involved in resolving any conflict. Likewise, anyone can be invited to intervene or mediate in a conflict in a situation whereby the conflicting parties cannot resolve the conflict among themselves⁴⁶. This is against the backdrop of the congregational system of church polity in Baptist churches.

In the words of some scholars, "...an accurate knowledge of a particular type of conflict will aid the diagnosis of the conflict"⁵¹. Therefore, the first means of resolving conflict is getting information about the conflict that will give the pastor early notification or warning. A theologian put it this way, "The pastor needs to develop an early warning system by means of which he can recognize a situation before it flames out of control"¹⁷. This was considered necessary by one of the respondents¹³. This respondent asserted that he has "the phone numbers of all my church members on my phone"¹³. This enables the respondent to be able to contact any church member at will. The pastor takes action immediately after the conflict is known to the pastor by contacting each party in the conflict separately to hear their sides of the story. After that, the pastor calls the parties together and attempts to resolve the conflict. If the initial attempt does not succeed, the pastor takes further action.

Before calling any party, a respondent said that he would endeavour to identify what the conflict is all about, identify the interests (personal, corporate, elements, source), and identify the persons involved directly or indirectly in the conflict and set a target⁶. A scholar corroborated this by asserting, "One cannot resolve conflicts and make peace unless the root cause of the conflicts have been identified and dealt with"¹⁶⁰. In line with the respondent and the assertion, a theologian gave these suggestions:

- 1) making visible the issues involved,

- 2) examining the prevailing assumptions, and
- 3) exploring the alternatives available for controlling or resolving the conflict¹⁷.

It is essential to make the resolution of the conflict issue-based instead of personality-based. In other words, “During a conflict, the focus should be on issues and not on personalities”¹⁶¹. In the words of another scholar, “...it is so important to consider the stages of conflict development, from its sources – direct and indirect, through dynamics – escalation and searching for ways out, to ending the conflict, which is a conscious or unconscious choice of a method of conflict solution that will end it, not just freeze it”¹⁶².

More elaborately, another theologian “has provided a structure for naming and identifying the different levels of intensity of conflict in a group”¹⁶³. In the framework, the theologian identified five levels. Level One is the Problems to Solve that is problem or issue oriented. Level Two is Disagreement where people are more concerned with self-protection than problem-solving. Level Three is the Contest, where people shift their objectives to win the argument and come out on top. Level Four is Fight or Flight. The main goal of the conflicting parties is to hurt or get rid of others or to leave if they cannot achieve this. Level Five is Intractable where the conflict is getting out of control of the conflicting parties, and the goal of contending groups is to destroy one another¹⁶³. Furthermore, another scholar gave these five steps of resolving conflicts:

- a) detecting the source of the conflict;
- b) looking beyond the incident;
- c) identifying how the situation could be changed;
- d) finding solution both conflicting parties can support; and
- e) making the parties to agree on the found solution¹⁶⁴.

In resolving a domestic violence conflict, one respondent said that he used a video clip of a man who rough handled his wife in another country to intervene in the conflict. The

respondent first sent the video clip by WhatsApp Messenger to the husband in the conflict. Later, the respondent called the man through WhatsApp Messenger to ask the man about his view on the video clip. After that, the respondent counselled the man about the hazards of being violent when one disagrees with another person.

As discussed earlier, a unique way the respondents use social media unconsciously to prevent conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence proactively is through teaching and preaching. Some of the respondents specifically mentioned this. However, it has to be noted that the primary task of a pastor is the ministry of preaching and teaching¹⁶⁵. Interestingly, the popular translation of the word “pastor” in Yoruba is “*Oniwaasu*”: one who preaches. Pastors preach every Sunday and during any service. They teach the word of God through Bible studies and other teaching avenues of the church¹⁶⁵. They preach and teach about peaceful coexistence and avoidance of conflicts regularly. One of the respondents even admitted that he has been using social media to do this⁴⁵. In relation to peacebuilding, a scholar asserted, “One of the ways Christianity has helped in securing peace in Nigeria is by appealing to the conscience of the people through ethical teachings”¹⁶⁶. In a respondent's opinion, these proactive teachings and preaching have made resolving conflicts easier for the pastors³¹.

One of the issues that pastors stressed in their preaching and teachings on conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence is the issue of forgiveness. One respondent underscored this¹⁶⁷. In his words, “I always emphasize the issue of forgiveness in my preaching and teachings because anyone who is not ready to forgive cannot live peacefully with his neighbours”¹⁶⁷. Many scholars corroborated this as reviewed already in Chapter Two.

One of the denominational leaders who coordinates the Sunday School ministries of the Convention reiterated the importance of Sunday School in resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence among church members¹¹. A religious educator has defined Sunday School as “...the church exercising its teaching function through church-related

officers and teachers with the four-fold purpose to reach, teach, win and develop”¹⁶⁸. There have been many studies on the effectiveness of Sunday School as a teaching arm of the church and the teachers/workers of Sunday School in the church¹⁶⁹. There was a recent attempt by this researcher to study how Sunday School can resolve conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence among church members¹⁷⁰.

One of the respondents referred to a unique way of resolving conflicts in a church setting, especially conflicts that directly involve the church pastor as a significant player in the conflict⁴⁸. This special way is the act of sending another pastor from the national headquarters, state (conference) headquarters or a Bible college to the church to serve as an “interim” pastor of the church⁸⁶. The original church pastor will step aside for some time while the interim pastor takes charge of the church and tries to mediate in the conflict situation⁴⁸. This is regardless of whether the pastor in the conflict was right or wrong⁴⁶. The interim pastor can be in the church for “six months renewable once, making a total of one year”⁸⁶. The scenario may be a situation where the church members disagree on whom to call to be the church's next pastor at the exit of the current pastor. In order to prevent conflicts and anarchy in the church, the association or state conference may appoint an interim pastor to be in charge of the church for a period of time⁸⁶. The effectiveness of this means of mediation varies from one church to the other. Citing many instances, one of the Convention leaders opined that this means of resolving conflicts in the church “has worked marvellously”⁴⁶. Nevertheless, this opinion is a subject for further study.

The onus of resolving conflicts in the church lies mainly on the church pastor. This made a respondent assert that “...one who will mediate in a church setting must be empowered by God. He must be ready to sacrifice many things”⁴⁸. A scholar gave a critical function of the pastor as a mediator: “to divest conflict situations of their nonrealistic elements of aggressiveness”¹⁷.

A Convention leader referred to the original diaconate ministry where seven people were selected in the Early Church to resolve a conflict in the budding church^{46, 171}. However, as discovered by some researchers, deacons that should serve as mediators in conflicts are sometimes prominent actors in many conflict situations in some Nigerian Baptist churches^{82, 144}.

Another vital thing about conflict management in a church is the exemplary lifestyle of the pastor. One respondent opined that “as we [pastors] are preaching and teaching about the peaceful coexistence among our church members and possible avoidance of conflicts, we have the responsibility of showing the example to our church members”¹⁶⁷. The respondent corroborated his opinion with Apostle Paul’s injunction in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” The respondent summed up this by asserting that settling a crisis will be much more difficult for a pastor known for causing or always being enmeshed in conflicts¹⁶⁷. A researcher substantiated this by asserting that “...the lifestyle of pastors goes a long way towards influencing the spiritual life of the church”¹⁷². The researcher, therefore, recommended that pastors “should be people who reflect the character of Christ. They must have a reputation beyond reproach, have spiritually mature edifying speech, have self-control and respectable conduct, be sociable, be faithful in marriage, and have skills and knowledge of the faith”¹⁷².

Apart from all these ways of resolving conflicts in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention as mentioned by the respondents, as asserted by one of the denominational leaders, the Convention as a faith-based organisation has a laid-down procedure of resolving conflicts from the local church level to the Convention level in its constitution¹⁰⁰. This procedure is contained in the constitution of the Convention⁸³. This procedure has been extensively cited in Chapter Two. While many church members, pastors and churches are adhering to this, as demonstrated in the ways pastors are resolving conflicts

above, there is a handful of litigation cases in the churches of the Convention⁸⁴. A respondent thought that the principle of autonomy of a local church as believed and practised by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and its churches at times renders the Convention powerless to exercise any authority on such un-cooperating churches, pastors, and members⁴⁰. However, one of the Convention leaders thought that the autonomy of a local is beautiful and good when the members are under the leadership of the Holy Spirit¹⁰⁰. This is against the backdrop that the church is understood to be "...a congregation of believers who have been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light [with the infilling of the Holy Spirit]"⁵⁰. It is the opinion of an elderly pastor that this principle should be revisited¹⁷³. Responsible and regulated autonomy should be considered as the total autonomy of a local church can lead to disorder and anarchy in the organization¹⁷³.

4.2.3.3. Effectiveness of Mediative Dialogue

A researcher has emphasized the importance of a third party in mediative dialogue and other forms of conflict resolution¹⁷⁴. Likewise, another researcher has reiterated the roles of leaders and type of leadership in conflict resolution¹⁷⁵. In response to a question that has to do with the extent the pastors as third parties consider their conflict resolution means effective among their church members, one of the Convention leaders of the asserts, "Many conflicts have been resolved by pastors without the knowledge of the outside world. Only those that are unresolvable, and that gets out of hands, are known beyond the pastor and the conflicting parties"⁹⁹. The ability or inability of the pastor to resolve a conflict depends on the wisdom that the pastor applies. It also depends on the level of the spirituality of the church members. A pastor argued that mediative dialogue would be effective "to a very large extent, if people are genuinely saved and follow the teachings of the Bible with a high level of

spiritual growth, easily mediative dialogue will resolve conflicts as people will not need it to go beyond that level”³¹.

While many pastors opined that their means of resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members are very effective, some thought that the means are effective to some extent. The variation in these responses has to do with the humanness of the people involved – pastors, church members, and non-church members in the society. For instance, a pastor admitted that he can resolve most of the conflicts and make people live peacefully with one another in his church because of the fear of God that the people have and the respect they have for the pastor as the representative of God among them⁴⁰. Another pastor corroborated this by saying, “A major factor for this success [of mediative dialogue] is when the person resolving the conflict commands respect with the people he is resolving any conflict”³¹. Nonetheless, another pastor confessed that many of the church members pretend to agree to resolve the conflict because of their respect for the pastor and God, but not really because they are willing that the conflict should end and live peacefully with one another¹⁷⁶.

One of the respondents admitted that when mediative dialogue does not resolve conflicts, he usually resorts to arbitration where he will give orders to either one or both of the conflicting parties to do certain things⁴⁵. This option works on many occasions, although the respondent also admitted that it is not the best, but, he uses it as the last resort⁴⁵. However, arbitration is a temporary resort as many of the respondents admitted. Another pastor even asserted, “In the area of conflict resolution, a pastor may not be the final arbiter”¹³. An arbitration may not necessarily bring a lasting solution to any conflicting issue. One of the respondents preferred the means of persuasion of the contending groups to allow peace to reign if mediative dialogue fails⁹⁰. Part of persuasion is giving room for a time by allowing

emotional wounds to be healed. Many scholars supported this idea of persuasion in conflict resolution¹⁷⁷.

4.2.4. Research Question 4: To what extent do church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention use social media to mediatively resolve conflicts?

4.2.4.1. Pastors and the Use of Social Media

Some of the pastors interviewed who are in the age range of sixty and sixty-five years claimed to “...belong to the ‘old school’ and not that skilful in the use of social media”⁴⁸. Conversely, most of the pastors are favourably disposed to the use of social media generally in their pastoral ministries, particularly in resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members and people in society. This is against the backdrop that social media use has become extensively accepted in people’s daily living throughout the world¹⁷⁸. A scholar affirmed that

...social media is becoming an integral part of present society. It plays a vital role in our daily life. No one can separate self from its influence. Besides being educative role, social media increases connections and communications. In addition to this, it also builds bridges over barriers and strengthens relationships. Furthermore, it encourages community participation and boosts one's confidence¹⁷⁹.

Two other scholars supported this affirmation, “social media platforms facilitate the fast and easy exchange of information through sharing, discussion and communication, producing a huge amount of digital content”¹⁸⁰. Furthermore, a researcher asserted, “...the rate at which social media is transforming people’s social lives, influencing how they organize themselves, relate with friends, colleagues and family, share thoughts and showcase themselves”¹⁸¹. To corroborate this, some scholars simply asserted, “Numerous benefits and global use of social media (SM) have made it part and parcel of lives of the peoples”¹⁸².

In spite of this, a respondent described social media as ambivalent that can be constructive and, at the same time, destructive. According to this respondent, people tend to promote the destructive aspects of social media more than the constructive aspects⁴⁶. Many scholars have carried out studies on these destructive aspects and constructive aspects of social media. They referred to them as positive and negative impacts or effects of social media¹⁸³. Conversely, two researchers gave reasons why

...many Christian organizations, either out of sheer religious fanaticism, apprehension or misinformation have written off the Internet as some “unrighteous” thing that is apparently not fit as a channel for religious messages hence they have literally thrown away the baby with the bath water. Their position is predicated on the many ignoble, vicious and immoral posts on the Internet via the social media platforms¹⁸⁴.

One respondent asserted that social media now “...reduces stress and give opportunity to work at one’s pace”²². In the words of a scholar, “...social media has opened up new opportunities for public engagement and interactive dialog...”¹⁸⁵. Another respondent opined that social media also “...makes things easy in terms of arrangement of meetings, following up on discussed issues, and so on”⁴⁴. Some scholars buttressed this opinion: “Social media promotes effortless communication, and supports the achievement of common goals and interests through an impact on societal network formation”¹⁸⁶. To further support why pastors should use social media, an Internet evangelist gave and briefly explained sixteen reasons why every pastor should be on social media¹⁸⁷. These reasons, according to him, are:

- 4) Social media builds relationships with the pastor’s community;
- 5) Social media builds relationship with those outside the community of the church of the pastor;
- 6) Social media gets pastors into places they otherwise would not have access to;
- 7) Social media is where the people are;
- 8) Social media grows pastor’s personal impact on people;

- 9) The church members of the pastors are on social media;
- 10) Pastors get to see what other churches are doing on social media;
- 11) Social media gives pastors a peek into the real, everyday living of their people;
- 12) Social media can help pastors to disseminate information or announcements;
- 13) Social media makes communication with people more effective;
- 14) Social media is another mission field where souls should be won from anywhere the pastor is;
- 15) Social media can help pastors to promote their ministries;
- 16) Social media advertising is most effective and cheap;
- 17) Social media can help pastor to raise funds for their ministries;
- 18) Live streaming of church events keeps the church members of the pastor in touch;
and
- 19) There can be feedback and research through social media¹⁸⁷.

Some researchers asserted that “The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies and the Internet allows individuals to connect and interact in ways that were previously impossible”¹⁸⁸. However, two other scholars thought that the growing acceptance of social media is “closely linked to the evolution of society, not only with regard to an easier access to new technologies, but also to the society’s new lifestyle and new models of interpersonal relationships”¹⁸⁹. A respondent observed that many pastors were indifferent to the use of social media and did not appreciate the use of social media for a long time until the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown situation in 2020 when many pastors were forced to make use of social media in their ministries¹⁹⁰. Nevertheless, one of the respondents opined that the use of social media among pastors would depend on the context that such pastors find themselves and the calibre of people they are ministering to⁹⁴. To corroborate this, some scholars advised mediators of the “...need to be aware of the different types of [social media]

platforms, including open platforms (for example, Twitter), closed platforms (for example, Signal), and platforms that have both open and closed components (for example, Facebook)”¹⁹⁰.

Some researchers opined that “...social media is used in crises and conflicts for different reasons and by several actors”¹⁹¹. Nonetheless, some of the interviewed pastors argued that there is no point in using social media to resolve conflicts since they are physically close to their church members. Some of these pastors were philosophical by saying in Yoruba, “Oju ni oro wa.” That is, it is better to confront a person physically than relate with them through social media. Some scholars expressed a similar fear in online counselling¹⁹². Therefore, they advised,

Online counsellors need to be sure that the information provided the client across the internet or any other online media is received and understood as intended in order to determine the type of feedback that will be effective in the counselling relationship, the next line of action in the counselling process, referral provisions and the effectiveness of the counselling relationship itself¹⁹².

Some weeks after the interactions of this researcher with the selected pastors, this researcher received a WhatsApp message from one of the pastors who strictly pleaded anonymity. A photshot of the message (with hidden identity) is included in Appendix X. However, below is the text of the message with the immediate response of the researcher:

[31/07, 16:16] ... : Hello Reverend. Let me share this with you on condition that you will never disclose the real source of this information with anyone no matter who the person may be. You may however include it in the research you are doing currently on condition of strict anonymity. After your interaction with me on the use of social media to mediatively resolve conflicts among my church members some weeks ago, I have started handling a case now that involves an intending couple that vows not to sit down face to face to resolve the issue that is threatening their wedding ceremony. The ceremony is to take place in the next three months. One of the parties accuses the other of infidelity, and the matter was brought to me as the church pastor of the lady in the relationship. Since both of them are not ready to meet physically with me to resolve the issue, I have started using Whatsapp Messenger to interact with them. After some separate individual chats

with each of them, they have agreed to have mediative dialogue sessions with me through a WhatsApp group that I created for the three of us.

[31/07, 16:27] Bayo Afolaranmi (Pastor): Thanks so much this. I will include it in my reports based on the condition of anonymity as you requested¹⁹³.

A scholar corroborated this argument and the experience shared above by asserting that “...social media could offer a platform for people to confront each other and conduct rational discussions to form common understandings, even across socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic divisions”¹⁸⁵.

Whether there is a discussion to resolve a conflict physically or otherwise, social media can be used for follow up on what has been discussed³¹. This is regarded as a supplementary role. Nonetheless, a scholar disagreed with this and argued that social media is gradually taking centre stage of people’s interaction with one another¹⁹⁴. Either way, some scholars thought that people (especially the younger generation) are now interacting “...both online and offline and switch between these dimensions or even interact online and offline simultaneously”, making the two – physical interaction and social media interaction – to stand side by side¹⁹⁵.

Social media, despite “its strength and weaknesses”, is viewed as “a good means of reaching out to or communicate with church members and non-church members”^{13, 68}. Communication is becoming more effective because of the introduction of many digital means of communication especially social media¹⁹⁶. Social media aids communication. The use of social media is crucial in conflict resolution and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in society¹⁹⁷. As one of the respondents observed, physical contact cannot be used as the only means of resolving conflicts, especially in this digital age¹⁰⁰. In the words of a pastor, “Social media today is a good means of resolving conflicts because the entire world has moved from analogue to digital ways of doing things”³⁹. Another pastor corroborated this with this statement: “If not because of social media, it may not be easy to see people in conflicts,

especially during the COVID-19. Social media has made many things easy”³⁷. Some scholars corroborated these views who opined that “..social media plays an important role in mid and post-disaster management. This is achieved through listening, integration, collaborative networking, creating cohesion, fundraising, providing monitoring tools and research media [that] aid effective communication and coordination...”¹⁸⁶. Other scholars also supported these views by stressing, “Social media has become one of these critical digital platforms being utilised by these entities to carry out their agenda in terms of propagating information to a larger populace”².

In the words of other researchers in regards to COVID-19, social media “has become an important medium for information dissemination during the [COVID-19] pandemics and is playing a crucial roles...”¹⁹⁸. COVID-19 did not only affect church members and the pastoral ministries of Baptist pastors in Ibadan, but as reported, the “pandemic is a setback for sustainable development everywhere”⁶².

Furthermore, social media makes communication more accessible as they break the distance barrier no matter where people are. The world has become a global village where people can be reached at a click of a computer or a mobile phone that is Internet-enabled. Some scholars in a recent study reiterated this fact¹⁹⁷. A respondent stressed, “You cannot meet everyone physically. Using social media will go a long way because one can use social media in the comfort of one’s office, room, or anywhere”⁶⁶. Many pastors interviewed cited many instances when they have used social media to mediate between conflicting parties, especially married couples, when they (the pastors) could not readily meet parties because of distance. This is corroborated by some scholars when they asserted, “Social media platforms, such as Facebook, are considered useful arenas for closing potential divides across countries”¹⁹⁹.

It was the view of a pastor that "...using social media may reduce tensions that may arise if the conflicting parties are together. This allows parties to open up"²². A conflicting party may turn a physical mediative dialogue session into a rowdy one if provoked by what the other party says and does. Nonetheless, the fact that the contending groups are not in the same place but are relating through social media will prevent such unruly occurrences. The pastor, who is the mediator, will know when to pause or end a social media session when the tension is rising. Conversely, a conflicting party may find it difficult to express himself in a physical mediative dialogue session but the conflicting party may be free to say anything he wants to say through social media. A scholar corroborated this by giving this example: "when a man offends his wife and does not know how to approach her in person, he can make use of phone messenger to send a text of apologies to her, and this has a chance of resolving the conflict between them"²⁰⁰.

On the other hand, some people may abuse the privilege of using social media to resolve conflict, as a pastor gave an instance of somebody who started to be involved in cyberbullying when the pastor was mediating in a conflict situation²⁰¹. It is the respondent's opinion that such abusive actions should be one of the rules or guidelines that the mediator should have warned against before starting the online mediative dialogue session²⁰¹. Some researchers attested to this online nuisance thus: "...online abuse has been a pressing issue for decades owing to the widespread use of the internet, which forces nations to enact legislation to curtail hate speech on online platforms"²⁰². These researchers recommended detective devices to be included on social media to curtail the "offensive language"²⁰². Other scholars called for "...the need for resilience, critical awareness and safe online navigation emerges as a significant necessity of our times, indicating that digital literacy practices should now inherently integrate critical components to respond both to social and digital encounters"²⁰³.

A respondent opined that “...in expressing one’s views through social media, there must be a guarantee that none of the conflicting parties will divulge any information without one’s permission”¹³. This is one of the fears that many people have in using social media to resolve conflicts. The respondent further suggested that “It is not advisable to use social media to resolve conflicts when the conflicting parties cannot keep secret or information that should not be disclosed”¹³.

The Internet generally and social media specifically are revolutionizing the world and the means of communication in the world²⁰⁴. So, a pastor asserted that “...any pastor that does not know about social media is deficient in a way in his miniseries”³⁹. The reason is that things are not done the same way they have been done ten years ago. In fact, the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown and physical or social pandemic have changed the ways many things are being done in the world in the last two years²⁰⁵. As a result, pastors and other persons in the world are now thinking of alternative ways of doing things to meet up with the changing world²⁰⁶. Social media, in particular, is seen by one of the respondents as an excellent means of communication and conflict resolution, especially in the post-COVID-19 era⁶⁸. Some researchers have referred to this post-COVID-19 period as a “new normal” period that individuals and organisations should adapt to²⁰⁷. A respondent asserted that social media is one of the “new normal” that pastors have to adapt to¹⁰⁰. A researcher corroborated this as the “new normal” period occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic has made many peacebuilders to turn from the “real world” of face-to-face interactions to the digital space²⁰⁸.

Nevertheless, some of the pastors are sceptical about the use of social media. One pastor categorically asserted, “...social media can cause or escalate conflicts”⁹⁰. This scepticism is understandable with some abuses and disadvantages of the use of social media, as highlighted by some scholars²⁰⁷. In spite of this, one should focus on the advantages, rather

than the disadvantages and abuses, of using social media and making good use of the digital means of communication²⁰⁴. A similar opinion has been expressed earlier by an Internet ministry expert after highlighting some of the challenges of using the Internet for the Gospel and Christian ministries²⁰⁹.

A scholar has commended social media as a means of communication that is "...complementing existing forms of face-to-face gatherings"²¹⁰. Nevertheless, a respondent, having regarded using social media as a welcome development, thought that "...using social media should not rule out face-to-face communication"²⁷. The respondent argued further that no matter how good social media may be, the tested traditional ways of interacting with people are still better and should not be jettisoned²⁷. In spite of this, social media should also be given a chance to become one of the proven and accepted ways of interacting with people especially resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence.

In responding to this research question, some of the pastors interviewed mixed up their use of phone calls and text messages with social media²¹¹. However, some of these pastors admitted that using phone calls and sending text messages have been a stepping stone for them to start using social media, especially instant messaging apps like WhatsApp Messenger and Telegram Messenger.

As asserted by a researcher, the younger generation is more at home with social media and other technological tools²⁰⁴. Consequently, to reiterate the importance of social media to the youth, a youth pastor counselled, "If you want to retain your youth and teenagers, you have to be in their world by being on social media. This will prevent losing the youth to other churches that are technologically inclined"²⁷. This youth pastor buttressed her argument that youth and teenagers prefer to interact more with their pastors on social media than any other means.

A pastor averred that his church "...has prepared for the use of social media even before the outbreak of COVID-19 that shut churches down [in the year 2020]"⁶. This really helps this church as the church is doing almost every church activity also on social media⁶. This is a proactive way of approaching the use of social media in pastoral ministry. It is this pastor's opinion that pastors should be proactive, not only reactive, in their approach to the use of social media. This will make the continuous innovations in this digital age not meet the pastors uninformed and unprepared⁶.

A pastor opined that "...people that will use social media for mediative dialogue must be well versed in using [social media]"⁴⁵. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Rome was not built in a day. One should not wait until one is well versed in using social media before starting using it. Practice, constant practice, makes perfect. As one is practising using social media, one will be becoming more versed in using it, and as time goes on, one will be well versed. Social media and other aspects of the Internet are so exciting that if one creates interest and time for them, one would be surprised about the progress one would be making in understanding using them.

4.2.4.2. Facebook²¹²

Many pastors interviewed have the view that "Facebook exposes secrets" because everything that one posts on Facebook will be visible by many people, especially Facebook "friends" and other "friends" of one's Facebook friends²². This view is making many of the pastors to be sceptical and careful of using Facebook for conflict resolution in general and mediative dialogue in particular. In line with this view, a pastor asserted, "Facebook cannot be useful for resolving interpersonal conflicts", and another pastor opined that "using Facebook should be restricted!"^{13, 39}

A respondent opined that Facebook "...can even be used to monitor the process of conflict resolution and project to other people outside the process that progress is been made in the conflict resolution process. This even aids the process. It can even be used to announce the result of the end of conflict"⁴⁴.

Many respondents admitted that their major use of Facebook is to post messages on their Facebook walls. These messages may be in the form of short instructive quotes, teachings and preaching of the word of God, and giving information and announcements about the activities of their churches. Interestingly, most pastors did not know that they could use this Facebook feature of wall postings to post messages on peace and conflict resolution. This is a preventive and proactive measure to inculcate the spirit of harmony in the members of their churches and prevent conflict situations that may arise in the future. If any conflict arises, as conflict is inevitable, pastors can refer to such postings in the process of resolving the conflict.

Other features of Facebook can be used to resolve conflicts, especially mediative dialogue. These features are highlighted and explained briefly in relation to mediative dialogue in Appendix V.

4.2.4.3. Twitter

Many pastors interviewed admitted that they are not on Twitter, not to talk of using Twitter to resolve conflict or promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members. A respondent held that he is using Twitter mostly on commenting on political matters based on biblical injunctions⁸⁵. Some of the respondents also admitted that while they are not using Twitter as a person, their administrative staff members are using it on behalf of the church to post some Tweets about the church activities. In support of this, an Internet evangelist has proposed that every pastor needs social media manager that will help the pastor manage his

activities and ministries online and also help the church to manage its activities and ministries online¹⁸⁷. The respondent also suggested some essential skills that such social media managers should have¹⁸⁷.

Some features of Twitter can be used for resolving conflicts, especially mediative dialogue. These features are highlighted and explained briefly in relation to mediative dialogue in Appendix VI.

4.2.4.4. WhatsApp Messenger

Since WhatsApp Messenger was used to sample the pastors interviewed in this research purposively, all the respondents are using this instant messaging app for personal and ministerial purposes. WhatsApp Messenger is considered “too effective, convenient and potent more than other social media because more people stay more on WhatsApp than others”⁴⁵. The most common use of the app is basic communication of sending and receiving messages as it has taken the place of conventional text messaging (short messaging service [SMS]). Another feature of WhatsApp Messenger that many pastors are using is WhatsApp voice message. One respondent argued that it is cheaper to speak for a longer time through WhatsApp voice messages than conventional telephone calls³¹. This can be used for prayers and counselling as the mediative dialogue session continues. A researcher has recently affirmed the cheaper, easier, and faster features of the Internet and social media that made the modern technologies endeared to many people in this contemporary digital world²¹³. Other scholars also affirmed this in their study².

While some of the pastors admitted that they have not been using the WhatsApp Messenger for conflict resolution, some said that it is being used as a follow up to their physical interactions with their mediatees. The pastors using the app to resolve conflicts

argued that the app, especially the one-on-one conversation through it, protects the privacy of the mediatees more than other aspects of social media.

One respondent who does not use WhatsApp Messenger to resolve conflicts in a church setting cited an example of using it to interact with two siblings outside a church setting who were having a conflict. The respondent mediated the conflict through WhatsApp Messenger and could resolve the conflict between them¹⁷⁶. When asked by this researcher why the respondent has not been using the same mode to resolve conflicts in her church, the respondent admitted that she has not had the opportunity and that she would readily make use of the opportunity if it comes¹⁷⁶.

The use of WhatsApp Messenger in relation to peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution to a respondent is for "...corrections and guidance on postings by church members"¹¹. That is, the respondent's use of WhatsApp Messenger is to monitor what her church members are posting on the WhatsApp groups of the church and correct or guide the members as to the appropriateness or otherwise of such postings. This has prevented and deescalated many conflicts among the church members¹¹.

Apart from the features mentioned above of WhatsApp Messenger, there are other features of the app that can be explored to promote peaceful coexistence and resolve conflicts among church members. Against the backdrop that WhatsApp Messenger has become the most widely used social media in the world in general and Nigeria in particular, this researcher compiled and published some of these features and their uses in Christian ministries some time ago^{214, 215, 216}. An adapted version of some of these features in relation to peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts is reproduced and presented in Appendix VII.

4.2.4.5. Telegram Messenger

Telegram Messenger is a relatively new instant messaging app that many Baptist pastors in the Ibadan metropolis are now migrating to and using in their ministries. This fact is reflected in the responses of most of the respondents. Some respondents even disclosed that they had not started using the app. The relative newness of the app makes many pastors not to be using it for resolving conflicts. However, because of the strength of Telegram groups and channels of accommodation of many people – at most two hundred thousand (200,000) – more than WhatsApp groups and broadcast lists that can accommodate only two hundred and fifty-six (256) people makes pastors start exploring Telegram Messenger for their ministries and the activities of their churches²¹⁷. So, a church with a membership of over two hundred and fifty-six people can easily be in only one Telegram group or channel.

Some other advantages of Telegram over WhatsApp were shared on a WhatsApp group. These advantages are:

- a) You can go back and EDIT your posts without losing position in the discussion thread.
- b) You can REPLACE/CHANGE pictures/video if you inadvertently post a wrong one and still maintain same position on the discussion thread. Just double tap on comment/picture/video to reveal menu.
- c) You can delete your comments/pictures/videos for everyone.
- d) Administrators can delete any unacceptable post/pictures/videos for everyone.
- e) In addition to ability to remove, administrators can temporarily suspend erring subscribers from posting but permit READ only access. This is a major drawback on WhatsApp in managing the excesses of some subscribers who relentlessly flout rules governing a group.
- f) Administrators can PIN important post to the top. This makes it visible for as long as desired. On WhatsApp, important messages are lost in the thread and subscribers will need to scroll up the thread to find it.
- g) You can do almost everything you can do with Facebook posts on Telegram.
- h) And many more ... including BOLD/ITALICS of text font just like MS Word. Simply highlight and click on the three dots on the top right corner to reveal menu²¹⁸,

²¹⁹.

For a respondent, his use of Telegram Messenger is for training and teaching⁴⁰. As pointed out by another respondent, “One disadvantage of Telegram is that a new group member can have access to previous information that one may not want the new member to know”³⁹. This may be a disadvantage, especially for mediative dialogue, but to a respondent, it is an advantage because it serves the purpose of recording past events and sessions in the mediative dialogue process⁹⁰. More features of Telegram Messenger in relation to promoting peaceful coexistence and mediative dialogue are highlighted in Appendix VIII.

4.2.5. Research Question 5: What viable framework can the Nigerian Baptist Convention church pastors adopt to encourage the deployment of social media in mediative dialogue?

To underscore the importance of social media to the ministries of a pastor in general, a pastor rhetorical asked: “What would have happened to the church and pastoral ministries in this contemporary age, especially during COVID-19 lockdown, if there are no social media?”³⁹ Some scholars succinctly corroborated this by asserting that “...social media platforms have become invaluable tools for churches to survive in this technological age”². Almost all the pastors interviewed agreed that social media are veritable tools to be deployed in mediative dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts and promoting the peaceful coexistence of church members and other people. It is against this backdrop that made a researcher advise church leaders to “teach and train [their church members] to be actively involved in [in doing God’s works] by utilizing social media”²²⁰.

However, as observed by two respondents, the nature of the church and the personality of each pastor will determine the aspects of social media they would have an interest in exploring^{94, 99}. In the words of a pastor, “If I discover that people are using any aspect of social media more than other aspects, or one aspect of social media is becoming

more popular among people, I will learn how to use such aspect and start using it to reach out to the people”⁴⁵.

Therefore, based on most of the discussions above, and in relation to Transformative Theory (as conflict resolution and mediation theory) and Public Sphere Theory (as social media theory) as discussed in Chapter Two, there is a viable framework that church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention can adopt. This framework encourages the deployment of social media in mediative dialogue and peacebuilding. This is against the backdrop that the world has metamorphosed to a digital one where social media is making tremendous impacts on the way people communicate with one another²²¹. Thus, every pastor should be ready to explore and use as many aspects of social media as possible depending on which of the social media are common to their church members in their pastoral ministries to promote peaceful coexistence of their church members and other people in the society and resolve conflicts (especially through mediative dialogue) among them. The interrelation of the three themes is depicted in Figure 4.5 below. This will likely promote sustainable peace in churches specifically and the society at large. It will likely make Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals the United Nations – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development – more achievable before 2030.

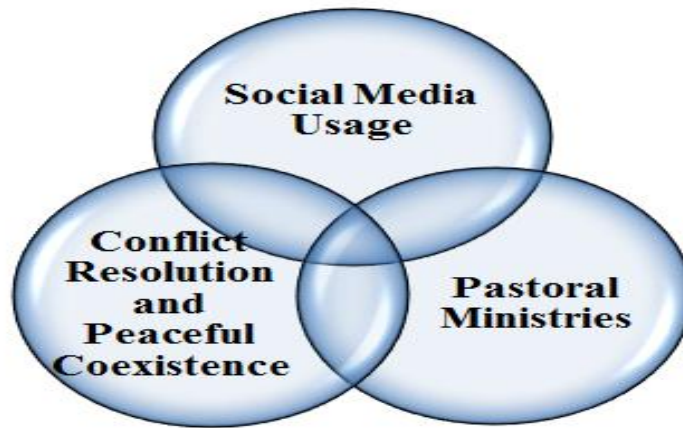


Figure 4.5: Interrelation of Social Media Usage with Pastoral Ministries and Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Coexistence

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

4.3. Challenges of Using Social Media by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Promoting Peaceful Coexistence

One respondent viewed social media as “more of an opportunity than a challenge”⁶. In support of this respondent and as reported by a scholar,

Many scholars have argued that much as the social media have provided a plethora of opportunities for transforming societies and the advancement of humanity through interactive information exchange, it has also created catalogue of challenges that the society is presently contending with³⁰.

One of such scholars in a recent study presented the “...new challenges and opportunities” and how they are “...substantially affecting the world’s dynamics...”²²². Other researchers opined that “some of the challenges that digitization (i.e., converting an analogue technology or practice into a digital one) brings to [the church] are challenges that always have been at the very core of its practices”²²³. In his conclusion to a study, a researcher asserted, “...social media offers wonderful opportunities to make peacebuilding not only more dynamic, engaging and innovative but possibly also more enjoyable for all participants”²²⁴. However,

the conclusion of a scholar about the advent and growing acceptance of social media is, “The fact that people now interact more online than physically brings more hiccups, ambiguities, misconceptions, misunderstanding, and doubts leading employment relationships to be more complex and conflict-prone than ever before”¹⁸¹.

So, since many pastors interviewed desire to make use of social media to resolve conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence among their church members and other people in the society, they identified some challenges they are facing or likely to face in making use of social media in their ministries generally and in resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence specifically. The Nigerian governmental agency that is responsible for monitoring the use of social media attested to these challenges of the use of social media in a released document: “While social media tools have presented unparalleled opportunities for individuals, organisations and governments across the globe as part of corporate strategy for productivity and financial benefits, it also has huge challenges and security risks that have debilitating effects”²²⁵.

The challenges of social media as identified by the respondents are presented graphically in Figure 4.6. The responses of the respondents here are similar to the responses of pastors in a study carried out by this researcher during the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdown in 2020²⁰⁶. So, the presentation and discussion of the challenges here are an adaptation of one of the papers written out of the study²²⁶.

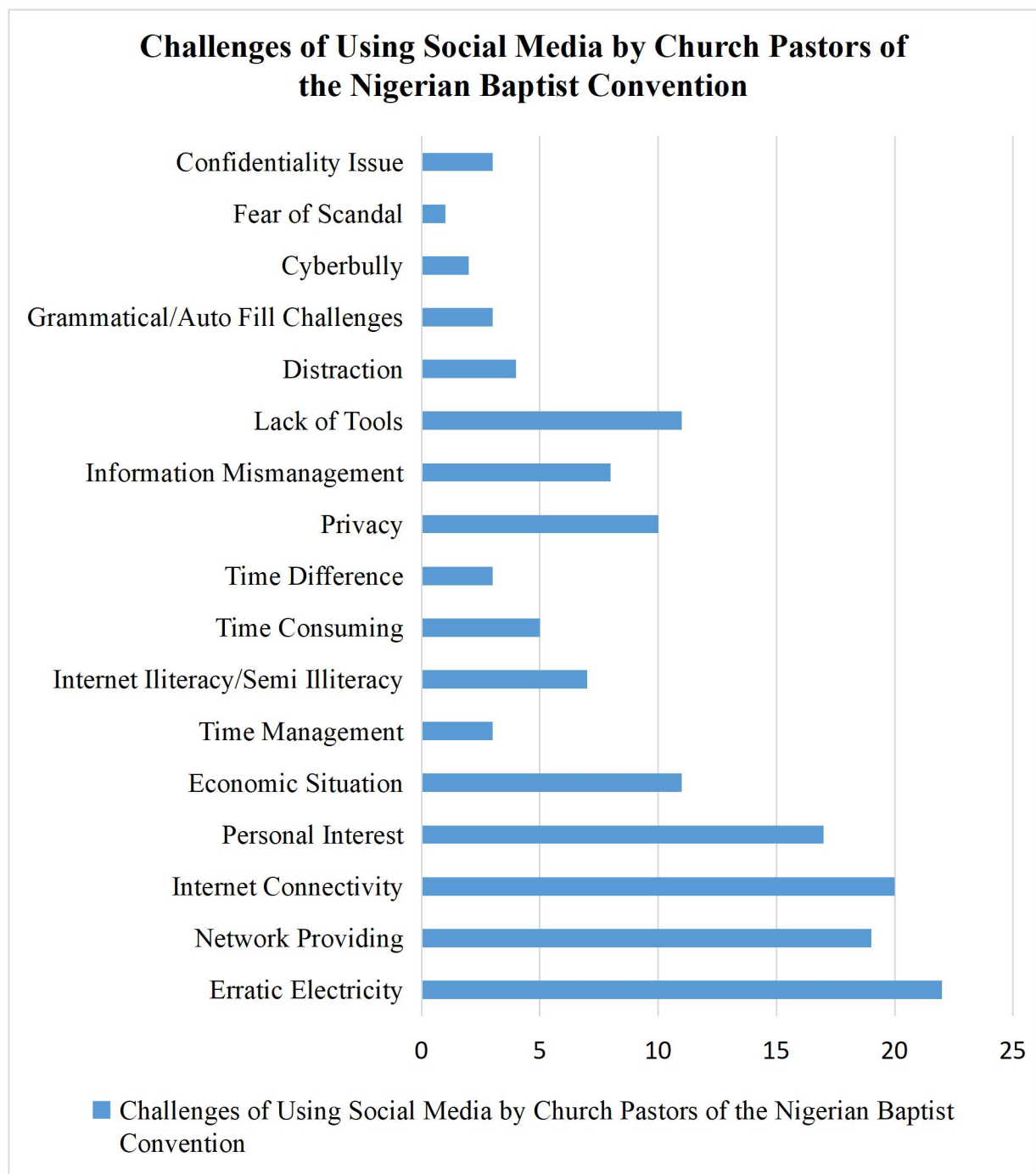


Figure 4.6: Challenges of Using Social Media by Church Pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Source: Researcher's Construct 2021

As indicated by almost all the respondents, and shown in Figure 4.6, erratic electricity supply was seen as the foremost challenge pastors, and church members are facing in Nigeria

when it comes to the use of the Internet generally and particularly resolving conflicts through social media. This is indeed a significant problem generally in Nigeria as there has been an erratic power supply for years. The respondents argued that since they would like to use social media to resolve conflicts, this irritant of erratic power supply is a significant constraint to them and their church members. Three scholars had earlier documented this challenge²²⁷. It is disheartening that in spite of this document and its suggested possible solutions over half a decade ago, the challenge is still persistent.

To have access to the Internet is ranked second among the main limitations of using social media to resolve conflicts among as indicated by the respondents. As asserted in a report, the Internet access has grown tremendously in recent years in Nigeria, and the country is considered to be the largest population of Internet users in Africa²²⁸. Nonetheless, not everybody has access to the Internet as “the lack of internet access [in the sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive] is a recognized barrier to the adoption of information communication technologies (ICTs)”²²⁹. As a result, the respondents thought that mediative dialogue through social media could not be applicable to every member of their churches. The fact that everyone does not have the needed technological tools like computers, Internet-enabled mobile phones and the likes, just as some of the respondents also specifically indicated, makes it impossible for many church members to have access to social media. Even many people that have these devices find it difficult to have access to social media because of the high cost of Internet access in Nigeria. Some scholars had earlier referred to what they tagged the “Nigerian digital divide”, where there is a disparity among persons who have Internet access and computers and those who do not have access because of the high cost of computers and high-priced Internet access²³⁰. The World Bank Group has also published a comprehensive report on this inequality in accessing the Internet in Nigeria²³¹.

Another shortcoming of the use of social media in conflict resolution is the issue of Internet network failure and interruption. To have access to the Internet is one issue in Nigeria; unbroken access to it is another issue. One may have access and still experience slow Internet speed. This issue of Internet network failure and interruption is considered by many of the respondents as bothersome as they at times felt frustrated with the failure or interruption of the Internet service when they are using it (especially when it has to do with video-related features of the social media) in resolving conflicts. In the words of a respondent, "...issue of confidentiality is lost as one is shouting and moving from one place to the other in order to find better network service"⁴⁸. These challenges had earlier been identified by two researchers in a study on postgraduate library and information science students and the use of electronic resources in southern Nigeria²³².

Personal interest in the use of social media is another challenge identified by the respondents. Although social media, the Internet and other information and communication technologies have emerged in the world for almost five decades, and they are evolving every day as they are changing the ways people are doing things in this technology-driven age, some people have not yet embraced the new technologies and started making use of them. A respondent asserted that "many church members are not making use of social media"⁴⁵. Some people view the Internet and other technological tools as evil and unspiritual. The respondents wondered how to use social media to interact with such people through the Internet.

The nonchalant attitude that some people (especially among the older generation) have towards social media has made some of them either Internet-illiterate or semi-literate people¹⁰⁰. These people can be referred to as "e-illiterate or "e-semi-literate" people. Some of these people cannot even read or write. It is difficult to interact with such people through social media since they do not know how to use social media and some other technological

tools due to their literacy level. Some scholars had reiterated the importance of computer literacy (and by extension Internet literacy) by asserting, “To properly and effectively use social media platforms, it is imperative for church members, leaders as well as pastors to possess at least some basic knowledge in computer literacy”². This was corroborated by other scholars¹⁸⁴. The new “normality” that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the world has made some scholars also advocate “digital literacy” not only for students but also for every one²³³.

Some of the respondents raised another issue of nonchalant attitude among social media users. This issue has to do with the way social media users use what some scholars referred to as “grammatically incorrect words, and spellings and emoticons”¹⁹². While this attitude has become “normal” among many social media users, as the scholars observed, the attitude is hindering

... communication effectiveness in online interactions as the use of these signs and languages may not really convey the message to the receiver, and the receivers of the message sometimes may find it difficult to comprehend the meaning of the words as truly intended by the sender [and] may then have a negative influence on the effectiveness of communication”¹⁹².

Although Ibadan that was used as a case study for this research is a metropolitan city, some respondents argued that the rural setting of many parts of Nigeria is a challenge to using social media to resolve conflicts. These respondents might have been referring to the suburb parts of Ibadan city. Some scholars assert that many rural areas in Nigeria lack basic social amenities, with “poverty...more obvious in [these] rural areas”^{234, 235}. Thus, having access to the Internet and other technological tools is difficult in these rural and suburban areas, and people in such areas are almost neglected in the Internet evolution of the world. Undoubtedly,

this will affect using social media to promote peaceful coexistence and mediative dialogue among such neglected people.

Closely related to the lack of basic social amenities in Nigeria is the low standard of living among the average Nigerians. This is another challenge for the use of social media for mediative dialogue. An online source confirms this that with “seven in ten Nigerians live off no more than USD 1.25 per day poverty is probably the biggest challenge [in Nigeria]”²³⁶. This low living standard is having adverse effects on many people (even pastors, as confessed by some of the respondents) to the extent that they find it challenging to have a personal computer or Internet-enabled devices not to talk of buying Internet data to access social media.

The spread of fake and unverified (or unauthorised) news is another threat that is giving social media a bad image in Nigeria, as some respondents argued. This can be referred to also as information mismanagement. Two scholars confirm this²³⁷. It affects the use of social media in mediative dialogue, especially when one of the contending groups divulges information prematurely to other parties in or out of the conflict situation. This may aggravate the conflict and impair the mediative dialogue process. It is even worse when the culprit is the pastor serving as the mediator. Fake and unverified news can be the cause of conflicts as well. A good case is the example of a Baptist pastor who, in January 2021, revealed the decision of the Executive Committee of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on the approval of the nomination of a new Convention President through social media without following due process. If the Convention authorities had not managed the situation with maturity, the action would have caused a leadership crisis in the Convention²³⁸.

Related to, but slightly different from, information mismanagement is the abuse of information dissemination through social media. One of the respondents said that he is sometimes put off on using social media platforms with the way people circulate the same

information on several platforms. This repetition of information dissemination may even be on the same platform. Coping with the enormity of this repeated information has become a challenge⁴⁶.

Some respondents pointed out Internet addiction as a challenge in their responses. Internet addiction has been one of the issues that many people have been battling since the advent of the Internet^{239, 240}. Addiction to surfing the Internet is simply the overuse or excessive use of the Internet that interferes with daily life. Its symptoms include: undue preoccupation with the Internet, loss of control of time spent on the Internet, inexplicable sadness or moodiness when not online, dishonesty in regard to Internet use, creation of virtual intimate relationships with other Internet users, loss of a significant relationship due to Internet use, lack of sleep, and the likes²⁴¹. Specifically, some scholars opined that “addiction to social media is a type of non-substance/behavioural addiction that affects millions of Internet users on the globe today, which necessitates, for many people, the adoption of certain psychotherapeutic methods to gain a regression from the compulsive behaviour”²⁴². Addiction to the Internet that increases with the wave of COVID-19 and its resultant lockdown and physical distancing have “...made people all the more dependent on varied forms of information and communication technologies”²⁴³. This made two scholars conclude that everyone has become “slaves to the internet and other information and communication technologies”²⁴³.

Internet addiction can be positive and, at the same time negative. The respondents who pointed this out in their responses were afraid of the abuse, overuse, or excessive use of social media if they started using communication to resolve conflicts in their ministries. This abuse is referred to as “Social Media Obsession” by a devotional writer²⁴⁴. This obsession includes “sharing gossip, posting humorous jokes or family photos, and networking”²⁴⁴. Other researchers referred to this as “losing time”²⁴⁵. The researchers went further to

elaborate on this by asserting, “Playing social media is indeed fun and exciting, to the point that sometimes it makes us ignore other activities. Not only that, but social media also makes some users move away from the real environment and become other people in their content or posts”²⁴⁵. Some respondents even argued that the excessive use of social media has led to some relationship conflicts among the youth in their churches. While some researchers agreed with this in a study by asserting that excessive use may adversely affect both relationships between people and the personal well-being of the users, the researchers identified sacrifice as a possible emotional factor to lessen the damaging effects of Internet addiction²⁴⁰. Some scholars recommended that stakeholders should enlighten people on the appropriate use of social media and the Internet so that they would not be addicted to the use of these modern technologies²⁴².

The fact that some organizations are now integrating social media into the workplace as confirmed in a recent study is making social media intrude into the private lives of many people²⁴⁶. A respondent referred to this as an adverse effect of social media⁹⁹. To curb this, it is the suggestion of the scholars that carried the said study above that “contemporary organizations should pragmatically intensify their efforts in mitigating the impact of social media use on workers’ well-being”²⁴⁶.

Another dangerous effect of using the Internet is cyberbullying – “an act of being mean to others by using information and communication involving electronic technologies to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to an individual or group which can be done by an individual or group”²⁴⁷. While many respondents expected social media to serve as a means of mediative dialogue, some mediatees started using it to cyberbully other conflicting parties and even the mediators, their pastors that were supposed to be revered servants and representatives of God. A respondent cited an instant when a mediatee started to use foul languages that the mediatee could not use if the mediatee were physically before the

respondent in the respondent's interaction on WhatsApp with the mediatee in an attempt to mediate in a conflict the mediatee's had with one of her siblings²⁰¹.

Some respondents expressed fear in using social media because of Internet fraud or cyber crime that has become a menace in the Nigerian society. The rate at which some people are getting involved in Internet frauds and scams is alarming as some scholars have attested to it²⁴⁸. This is making many people be sceptical of embracing anything that has to do with social media and the Internet. A pastor experienced this scepticism from many people when the pastor started his Internet ministry almost two decades ago. The situation is not getting better for many people who want to reach out to others through the Internet, especially pastors who want to use social media to resolve conflicts among their church members.

Apart from fear of Internet fraud, another fear expressed by some respondents is the fear of scandal and blackmail that may emanate from the mediative dialogue sessions through social media. Some scholars supported this in a recent study and concluded that "those who disclose more information online are at a greater risk of becoming a victim of blackmail on social media"²⁴⁹. The respondents that indicated this fear argued that pastors, and most especially church members, might be afraid of any scandal that result from recorded audio or video clips or typed messages from the personal and group interactions during the mediative dialogue sessions. This fear was expressed in a situation where one of the parties with access to these sessions divulge the whole or part of the sessions to other parties or the public. Information that is considered private and secret but that has been disclosed through social media in one of the mediative dialogue sessions may be used against any of the parties to tarnish the image of the party or even in litigation if the conflict escalates to that level. These respondents viewed that some mediatees will prefer unrecorded sessions that can be denied if need be.

The issue of privacy or confidentiality is related to what was just discussed above. Many scholars have discussed extensively this issue in relation to social media²⁵⁰. Some respondents thought that many of their church members value their privacy so much that they find it challenging to reveal secrets to their pastors physically talk less of revealing such secrets through social media. This made most of the respondents reluctant to reveal the details of some of the conflicting situations they have handled or are handling with this researcher during the interview sessions. Attempts by the researcher to be participant-observant in some of the mediative sessions were unsuccessful as the respondents declined the offer because of the privacy of their church members. This is one of the limitations of the study, as stated in Chapter One.

Also related is the issue of confidentiality on the pastor's part, which, according to a researcher, is "...to a pastoral counsellor must be absolute, unless it's part of the informed consent process"⁴⁹. Some church members do not trust their pastors enough to reveal secrets to the pastors. Some pastors, out of carelessness, have betrayed their church members' confidence in them. This betrayal may be the posting of information about church members by pastors through social media. Such betrayal may impair the mediative dialogue process.

Time consuming has been alluded to when discussing Internet addiction above. The fear of the use of the Internet generally and social media particularly being a waste of time has been expressed by some scholars in the past²⁵¹. Nonetheless, some respondents did not see this as an addiction but a challenge that has to be controlled. The relatively low cost of Internet telephoning compared to conventional phone calls has made many people relax and spend much time on social media as mediate in a crisis. Time spent in this regard may not be a waste of time, but the fact is that the time used on social media might have eaten deep into other ministerial issues that ought to have been attended to.

Time management is another challenge that some pastors are facing in using social media to resolve conflicts. According to a respondent, a mediatee may go on speaking during a mediative dialogue session through social media without minding the time the mediatee spends. This may become a source of another conflict as such mediatee's lack of time management may become a nuisance to other conflicting parties and even the mediator¹⁰⁰.

As some respondents argued that social media had solved the problem of distance between the mediator and the mediatees, they also viewed the time differences in the different parts of the world as a challenge. For instance, a respondent cited a situation where the respondent had to deny himself of sleeping at night because that was the daytime in the other part of the world where the people the respondent was mediating in their conflict reside⁴⁴.

One of the respondents expressed concern about the attitude of the Nigerian government towards the use of social media, especially the proposed regulation of social media in the country⁶⁸. Interestingly, the Nigerian government banned Twitter a day after this respondent expressed the concern as Nigeria's federal government issued a press release banning Twitter operations in Nigeria on June 4, 2021^{252, 253}. This action has become a great challenge to social media users, especially Twitter in Nigeria. A centre considered this action "an unlawful restriction on freedom of expression and other freedoms exercised online" and advised the Nigerian government to "revoke the directive in line with its international obligations and adopt measures to foster digital freedoms in consultation with all stakeholders"²⁵². To a scholar, the ban is regarded as an "erosion of freedom of information", and "the current Nigerian government is bent on circumventing the right to free speech in the country"²⁵³. Nonetheless, regulation of social media is not peculiar to the Nigerian government as asserted by a scholar: "Despite the [positive impacts] of the social media,

there have been several agitations for its regulation not just by individuals, but also by governments around the world”²⁵⁴. As chronicled in an online source,

The social media restriction discussion has been going on for a while [in Nigeria]. A version tagged “Frivolous Petitions (Prohibition) Bill 2015” aka Social Media Bill, was introduced in 2016 during the 8th National Assembly but got the axe as it met heated protests.

For 2019, Nigerians got the first whiff when President Muhammadu Buhari declined to sign the Digital Rights Bill on the grounds that it “covers too many technical subjects and fails to address any of them extensively.”

The Digital Rights Bill was supposed to be one that protected the fundamental rights of Nigerians on the Internet and ensured their safety and well being.

Another ominous sign was a part of the president’s independence day speech, which seemingly foretold plans of impending Internet censorship²⁵⁵.

In a recent study, a scholar concluded that

Ultimately, the evolving role of social media in the context of protest movements invites policymakers and institutions to question the potential benefits and consequences of the democratization of the internet. On the one hand, this tool has expanded transparency in the context of corruption and human security, while also broadening the way individuals communicate with each other on a global scale. On the other, it has proven to be vulnerable to manipulation and censorship, which counteracts some of said benefits. In a world becoming more interconnected with every new technological advancement, the evolution of digital media will become a battleground for governments and privacy advocates alike. It will be important to include the critical role social media platforms play in the fight against oppression and in the movement for equality and freedom²⁵⁶.

Nonetheless, one would wonder why a tool that has enabled “...both the government and the governed to express their minds about the issues that affect the society” would become something that the government would want to suppress. Recently, some researchers provided a global analysis of how world leaders use social media to their advantage, especially during social unrest^{257, 258, 180}. The researchers recognized the value of social media

by government officers as “a tool for digital diplomacy, to broadcast messages and issue rapid responses to crises, and to manipulate the political and media agenda”²⁵⁸.

A scholar explained some reasons for the possible regulation of the use of social media, not only by the Nigerian government but also by other governments throughout the world²⁵⁴. These reasons are:

- i. defamation activities by individuals on social media,
- ii. unimaginable disruption of government activities,
- iii. proliferations of fake and unverified news,
- iv. citizen journalism, and
- v. hate speeches²⁵⁴.

Another scholar gave another argument of the Nigerian government that “...just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so, uncontrolled use of the social media serves but to destroy”²⁵⁹. Against this backdrop, a scholar has recommended “...strict action and, especially regulation ... when it comes to the use of social media as a tool...”²²².

Despite all these reasons and recommendations for a possible regulation by any government, another scholar thought that self-regulation on the part of the Internet platform companies would be most effective²⁶⁰. This self-regulation “...involves setting standards of appropriate codes of behaviour and content by and for the operators of social media platforms that are necessary to support freedom of expression and right to access of information and that stipulates how those behaviours will be monitored and enforced”²⁶⁰. It was the opinion of another scholar that stakeholders like libraries should be involved in a sort of self-regulation by “...widely teaching the principles of literacy and media literacy”²⁵⁹. Reacting to the ban of Twitter in Nigeria, a scholar thought, “Despite the anger that has been generated from both sides leading to the suspension of the operations of Twitter by the Nigerian government, it is

best for all issues to be resolved amicably, so that the suspension can be lifted and all issues resolved amicably”²⁶¹.

In a similar scenario in India, another microblogging app known as “Koo” was launched in March 2020 when the Indian government had a disagreement with Twitter²⁶². The new app has gained popularity since then in India and throughout the world, as it has already had over 4.7 million users as of 16 March 2021²⁶³. Just recently, the app was launched officially in Nigeria²⁶⁴. As some researchers posited, this new app may overtake other social networks and instant messaging apps because of the possibility of using local dialects as it has started with Indian dialects²⁶².

As good as auto-fill or suggested word feature in mobile phones, computers and other devices is, it has become a challenge. A similar challenge is grammatical error when typing a message. Some of the respondents pointed these out in their responses. An example of a word in an auto-fill feature that can cause or escalate conflicts is “wife” instead of “wifi”. An unwitting omission of “not” in a sentence, for instance, may aggravate a conflict.

In spite of all these challenges, a “general overview of vulnerability, threat and risk landscapes, and some countermeasures that can help mitigate against the risks” have been provided²²⁵. These are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Vulnerabilities & Threats, Risks and Countermeasures²²⁵

Vulnerabilities and Threats	Mapped Risks	Countermeasures
Exposure to the public can lead to fraudulent use of corporate identity or brand	Provides source of information that can be hijacked or exploited by adversaries, targeted phishing attacks on staff, partners or customers or reputational damage.	Scrutinize information exposure, use experts to conduct risk assessment that gives holistic view of how an adversary can turn corporate information to its advantage. Create awareness and education across tiers of users appropriately.
Viruses and Malware	Disruption of services (or	Ensure cybersecurity defence

distribution through the network	system downtime), data leak or theft, hijacking of network as zombies (botnets), cost of response and recovery.	in-depth strategy in the network, with constant updates on security patches and upgrades including antivirus and antimalware, content filtering and effective network monitoring of activities.
Undefined conversation and content rights	Unable to track, control contents leading to loss of legal rights.	Certify that user agreements of social media sites are reviewed by the legal and communications teams. Policy document should specify what information that can be posted. There should be mechanism to capture and log all conversations.
Use of individual user accounts to communicate official matters	Privacy breach, reputational damage, erosion of competitive advantage	Make a clear policy directive about use of personal social accounts. Ensure HR and Training create the necessary awareness that reinforces policy directive.
Staff postings of unauthorized images or information that link them to the legal entity.	Identity or brand diminishing, reputational damage	Policy directive should be clear how staff use organisation's images or resources/assets including IP in their personal social presence.
Unwarranted use of social media during office hours	Consumption of network resources, productivity loss, potential for increased exposure to malicious codes and viruses.	Policy directive should be clear on the engagement of social media. Technical department can use content filter or other security measures to limit access to social media sites, and only permit those who may have legitimate access to the sites.
Access to social media via organisation-supplied mobile devices (or smartphones)	Loss of mobile device, infection of mobile device, data theft/leakage, hijack of device control	Clear policy directive should be developed on the use of corporate devices. If within organisation's network, ensure that devices are routed through security controls, ensure constant update of devices including antiviruses and antimalware
The use of Social Media to spread fake news, misinformation, propaganda, rumours, hate speech, bullying, etc. has reached alarming state. Certainly, the nuisance of these threats come in many flavours, implying that sensational news and social media campaigns are usually filled with mistruths.	Recent events have shown that social network media can be used to spread or facilitate fake news, misinformation, propaganda, rumours, hate speech, etc. All these threats to the society can sway social, economic or political opinions, polarise the society, propagate divisive and cruel hoax, and alter beliefs, leading to racism,	Most users seem not to understand the consequences of their actions as many has argued that the whole idea is a matter of perception. The real issue is how to differentiate fake and real content because often users believe that the friends and the platform delivering the content are trustworthy. Currently, there is not acceptable standard or

tribalism, harassment, intimidation, and damage to reputations. It can affect international relations, irreparable harm or loss including death of an individual or persons.

solution to curtail ‘misleading content’, however, some steps as follows can help mitigate the threats:

- i. Development of appropriate policy and law;
 - ii. Early release of verifiable content;
 - iii. Monitoring of social network media content;
 - iv. Prompt issuance of counter content by constituted authority using the same media.
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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Findings

This study was carried out among Baptist pastors in the Ibadan metropolis. It was intended to find out the extent of the use of social media as one of the modern ways of communication in mediative dialogue by pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The objective is to see how this will likely improve sustainable peace and conflict resolution in faith-based organisations. Twenty pastors were purposively and randomly selected from a preliminary survey and interviewed. Five other national denominational leaders of the Nigerian Baptist Convention were also interviewed to know the opinions of the national leaders, not only local leaders, of the Baptist denomination on the subject matter. Responses from the interview sessions were collated and analysed. Some available documents were also used in the analysis of the data.

In the course of the study, the following findings were established that:

1. Pastors in the Ibadan metropolis have been promoting sustainable peace through their ministries in general and resolving conflicts through mediative dialogue in particular.
2. Most of these pastors have been using at least a category of social media personally and ministerially.
3. While few of the pastors have been intentionally making use of social media to promote sustainable peace and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue, most of the pastors, based on lack of knowledge and inexperience about some aspects of social media, have been doubtful and reluctant about using the social media to resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue.

4. The pastors' most commonly used social media are WhatsApp Messenger and Facebook.
5. Pastors are just shifting to and accustoming themselves to Telegram Messenger, and very few of them are using Twitter in their ministries.
6. In this digital age, every pastor should embrace the conscious use of social media to promote sustainable peace in the society and resolve conflicts among their church members and other non-church members through mediative dialogue.
7. Pastors should be trained formally or informally on how to use social media to promote sustainable peace in the society and resolve conflicts among their church members and other non-church members through mediative dialogue. This will turn them from "e-illiterate or "e-semi-literate" people to "e-literate" people.
8. Pastors should be mindful of how they are using social media in order not to misrepresent God that they act as His representatives and thereby lose the confidence of their church members and non-church members.
9. Church members should be trained how to use social media so that they will be on the same page with their pastors as the pastors use social media to promote peaceful coexistence and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue.
10. There are many limitations and challenges that the pastors and their church members face, and likely to face, in using social media, especially in Nigerian settings.

5.2. Conclusion

This study reveals that Baptist pastors in the Ibadan metropolis have been promoting sustainable peace through their ministries in general and resolving conflicts through mediative dialogue in particular. They have been doing this through prayer, teaching and preaching of the words of God. The study also reveals that most of these pastors have been

using at least a category of social media personally and ministerially. Furthermore, the study reveals that while few of the pastors have been consciously using social media to promote sustainable peace and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue, most of the pastors have been sceptical about using social media to resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue. It is revealed that the most widely used social media by the pastors are WhatsApp Messenger and Facebook. Pastors are just migrating to, and familiarising themselves with, the use of Telegram Messenger. It is also revealed that very few of the pastors are making use of Twitter in their ministries.

Therefore, it is concluded that in this technology-driven age, every pastor should embrace the conscious use of social media to promote sustainable peace in society and resolve conflicts among their church members and other non-church members through mediative dialogue. Pastors should be trained formally or informally on how to use social media to promote sustainable peace in society and resolve conflicts among their church members and other non-church members through mediative dialogue. This will turn the pastors from “e-illiterate or “e-semi-literate” people to “e-literate” people. This will also enhance peaceful coexistence in the society, thereby aiding the achievement of Goal Number Sixteen of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations that aims at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Therefore, the research generally recommended that governments, faith-based organisations, and pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, in particular, should deploy social media in the process of mediative dialogue as an instrument for deepening sustainable peace.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, the following recommendations are made for effective use of social media by the pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in particular and faith-

based organisations, in general, to promote sustainable peace in the society through mediative dialogue. These recommendations are made for pastors, churches, the government, and the general populace.

5.3.1. Recommendations for Pastors

For the reason that we are in a digital world, pastors should try their best to make use of social media. Any pastor that will be relevant in today's ministry should be on social media. Every pastor that wants to be effective in his ministry has to imbibe the use of social media. Similarly, this will endear the pastor more to the younger generation that is more inclined to the social media and other technological tools.

Pastors of the older generation (the "old school") should not close their minds to the use of social media. They should endeavour to be trained in using it and start using it. They will no longer be "e-illiterate or "e-semi-literate" people, but "e-literate" people that are more relevant in this technology-driven world.

Pastors should be strategic and proactive, not only reactive, in their approach to the use of social media. This will hinder the continuous innovations in this digital age from meeting them uninformed and unprepared. The proactiveness of the pastors can even make them join the league of discoverers of other innovations in the use of technological tools, not only in their pastoral ministries but also in the society at large.

Pastors should also be proactive in using social media to address issues that will prevent conflicts and promote peace. They can do this by posting teachings, short quotes, sermons (messages), Bible study outlines and other instructive messages through social media. This will imbibe the spirit of peaceful coexistence among their church members. It will also lessen the stress of resolving conflicts among church members and non-church members.

Pastors should engage volunteers or full-time staff members who are trained professionals in information and communication technologies (ICTs) to help the pastors handle some areas too technical in their use of social media to resolve conflicts. Pastors can also engage social media managers that will help them manage their activities and ministries online and help their churches manage their activities and ministries online. However, the pastors should endeavour to be knowledgeable in some areas so that secret information about their mediatees will not be unwittingly divulged to a third party. Such information disclosure may impair the mediative dialogue process and even make the mediatees lose confidence in the pastor and lose interest in the mediative dialogue process.

Pastors should facilitate the teaching and enlightenment of their church members on how to use social media. Pastors may organise seminars, workshops, and training for their church members by inviting trained professionals in information and communication technologies (ICTs) to handle the enlightenments. Such enlightenments will be of great help to the pastors as well as they also will learn new things. Such training will also make many members that are “e-illiterate or “e-semi-literate” people become “e-literate” people.

Pastors should have personal platforms/groups for specific conflict issues. These platforms can be created, used and closed down when the issues are resolved. The pastor should be the main administrator of the platforms/groups to be able to take charge of the proceedings on the platforms/groups. The pastor can then add people to and remove people from the platforms/groups as deem fit. The pastor should also set some rules for using the platforms/groups and ensure that the rules are followed strictly. As the administrator of the platforms/groups, the pastor should know when to make the group open for every member of the platforms/groups to contribute and when to close the group in restricting members from contributing.

To explore the Internet and social media, pastors should get good technological tools (like computer desktops and laptops, mobile phones, iPads, tablets). Technological tools are evolving almost every day. Pastors should invest in acquiring these up-to-date tools and explore them in social media.

Any social media that can protect the privacy of the conflicting parties should be explored in conflict resolution. It is evident that some features of some social media are for public consumption, at least for all the “friends” (and at times “friends” of “friends”), “fans”, and “followers”. This makes some information to be known by almost everybody on social media. Therefore, in using social media to especially resolve conflicts, only aspects or features of social media that will protect the privacy of the contending groups should be explored and used. This will create more confidence in the conflicting parties (mediatees) in pastors serving as mediators.

Pastors should be very careful in the ways they use social media. The carefulness has to do with many things. One of those things is what pastors post on social media. Pastors are representatives of God in the society. They are like ambassadors or agents of peace who should use social media to promote peace without causing or escalating conflicts. Pastors should not be carriers of fake and unverified information. What they post on social media must be confirmed, accurate and edifying information.

Another area of carefulness in the use of social media is the ability to keep secret and confidential issues. Pastors should not betray the confidence of their mediatees through social media. This is related to what is discussed above. Pastors should know the kinds of social media features that they should use to divulge any information. For instance, any information that is meant to be disseminated to a particular person should not be sent through a group platform or on wall pages that are seen by the public. Likewise, information meant for a group of people, probably the contending groups and other involved people, should be sent

through a group specifically created for the conflicting situation, not through any other group platform or on wall page that the group sees public.

Furthermore, pastors should be careful to be neutral on issues on/through social media. The moment the mediatees discover that the pastor who is serving as a mediator in a conflicting issue has taken side by his/her activities on social media, the mediatees may lose confidence in the pastor. The pastor may not be able to continue successfully in the pastor's roles as a mediator in the particular conflicting issue and even other conflicting issues.

Moreover, pastors should be mindful of using the auto-fill or suggested word feature in mobile phones, computers and other devices. This is necessary in order not to allow this auto-fill or suggested word feature to misrepresent their views as the auto-fill or suggested words may mean different things from what the pastors have in mind, thereby escalating the conflict the pastors are making efforts to resolve or even giving them the bad image in the eyes of the conflicting parties and other people that may come across their writing on social media.

As representatives of God among people, pastors should be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in what kind of social media they will use and how they will use social media to resolve conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence among their church members and other people in the society.

Pastors can use social media for record-keeping purposes. The previous or on-going proceedings of mediative dialogue sessions can be kept on social media for future reference by the pastors. The mediatees can also keep these records on their devices. Even when a mediative dialogue session has ended, and the pastor has closed the groups/platforms used for the session, the groups/platforms may not be deleted from the devices of the pastors for record purposes.

5.3.2. Recommendations for Churches

Churches should get good technological tools to explore the Internet and social media. Technological tools are evolving almost every day. Pastors should invest in acquiring these up-to-date tools and explore them in social media.

Churches should help their pastors financially. This help should be in the form of providing necessary technological tools for the pastors, augmenting the money used to buy Internet data in order to have access to the Internet almost at all times, and providing finances for church members (as identified by church pastors) who need to have access to the Internet during the mediative dialogue sessions online.

Pastors should be encouraged to spend money on accessing the Internet. This will not only enable them the opportunity of resolving conflict through social media but also give them access to information online.

5.3.3. Recommendations for the Nigerian Baptist Convention

The principle of autonomy of a local church should be revisited. Responsible and regulated autonomy should be considered as total autonomy of a local church can lead to disorder and anarchy in the organisation.

The congregational system of government as practised by the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention should be modified to enable church pastors to have more authority to resolve conflicts among their church members.

The Convention should liaise with its theological institutions in having a curriculum for Conflict Resolution as a course in the theological institutions. This course should be a compulsory course for every full-time student-pastor, and it should be optional for every pastor that comes back to the theological institutions for refresher courses.

5.3.4. Recommendations for the Populace

People should change their negative mindsets about the Internet and social media. They should explore it and discover its beauty in this technology-driven age. Internet literacy should be promoted, especially among the older generation.

As the global COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown and physical or social distancing have changed the ways many things are being done in the world in the last two years, pastors, as well as other persons in the world, should think of alternative ways of doing things to meet up with the changing world. Social media are one of the suitable ways that can be explored in these possible alternative ways.

While traditional ways of communicating and interacting with other people should not be jettisoned, social media should also be given a chance to become one of the proven and accepted ways of interacting with people especially resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Despite the financial cost implications of access to the Internet, making long calling through social media is cheaper than conventional telephone calls. Likewise, using social media to chat is cheaper than sending text messages. Therefore, social media should be explored in these two activities, especially when resolving conflicts between people with distance challenges.

As the Nigerian government sometime banned Twitter in the country, people, including pastors, can migrate to Koo and other available microblogging websites. This will enable them to continue to enjoy the benefits of microblogging websites apart from the banned Twitter. Even as Twitter is now permitted to operate again in the country, people will not be at a loss as they will have many microblogging websites to select from in interacting with other people throughout the world.

With the recent five-hour breakdown of Facebook and other associated social media platforms like WhatsApp Messenger and Instagram, people should not rely totally on a single social media platform. They should instead have accounts in other similar social media platforms and encourage their contacts to be on those similar social media platforms. This will guide against the disappointment any platform can pose in case it has any technical issue, is banned or even discontinued like Yahoo Messenger, BlackBerry Messenger, and old social media platforms were discontinued abruptly. Many social media platforms are coming up almost every day. People should be acquainted with these social media platforms and possibly create accounts on them in case of any eventuality with the existing popular platforms.

5.3.5. Recommendations for the Government

The government should do its best to address the menace of erratic power supply by changing old tools with new tested and high-quality ones. There should be proper and sufficient repairs of electrical power apparatuses. Anticorruption agencies should take stringent and instant action to curtail the problem of corruption and plundering of funds meant for power sector reform. The government should provide enabling environment in exploring other means of power generation like solar and nuclear power plants, training and re-training of staff of energy companies, prompt payment of salary and entitlement of staff of energy companies, formulation of policies and making of support systems for effective monitoring and regulation of energy companies by the concerned governmental agencies with proper follow-up. There should also be a provision of sufficient transformers to localities where such are needed to guard against congestion.

Furthermore, the government and Internet service providers should make Internet access available and cheaper. This will encourage more people to have access to the Internet.

Internet service providers should upgrade their services and make the Internet work more seamlessly.

Moreover, the government should provide an enabling environment for the populace's free use of social media. The recent total ban on Twitter in Nigeria and various attempts by the Nigerian government to regulate social media are not encouraging the use of social media. Freedom of expression as entrenched in the Nigerian constitution should be upheld.

In addition, the government should improve people's standard of living, not only in the urban settings, but also and most especially in the rural settings. If this is done, people will be motivated to have Internet-enabled devices, buy Internet data to access the Internet and be involved joyfully in using social media.

So also, concerned government regulatory bodies should enforce rules that will guide against fake and unverified news. Providers of online social network services and instant messaging should also put some measures to control the spread of fake and unverified news through their services. This will make the use of social media to have some confidentiality and credibility.

5.4. Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge in that it has revealed that Baptist pastors and other stakeholders in faith-based organisations can consciously use social media to promote sustainable peace and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue. The study also has provided how various aspects and features of social media (especially Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp Messenger and Telegram Messenger) can be used not only by pastors but also by other stakeholders in promoting sustainable peace and resolving conflicts through mediative dialogue. This is provided in the Appendices.

5.5. Areas of Further Research

Some areas of further research were discovered in the course of this study. These areas are:

1. There is a need to research how other categories of social media (apart from Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp Messenger and Telegram Messenger) can promote sustainable peace and resolve conflicts through mediative dialogue and other means of conflict resolution. Other categories of social media relevant to the promotion of sustainable peace and conflict resolution as identified in this study are Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, MySpace, Vimeo, Ning, Wikipedia, Pinterest.com, and some indigenous social media platforms in Nigeria such as Nairaland, allAfrica, NAIJA.com, OnlineNigeria, YNaija.com, Amverified.ng as online social network sites. Other identified instant messaging apps in relation to the promotion of sustainable peace and conflict resolution are Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Imo Messenger, and Viber.
2. There is a need to research possible solutions to the limitations and challenges of using social media in promoting sustainable peace and resolving conflicts and other areas of human endeavours.
3. There is a need to research the extent cyberbully, fake (and unverified or unauthorised) news (or information), and other vices of social media are negatively affecting the use of social media in promoting sustainable peace and resolving conflicts.
4. There is a need to research the extent to the use of interim pastors to resolve church conflicts is effective.
5. There is a need to research why churches have not been calling (or engaging) trained female pastors as the “senior” pastor (or pastor in charge) of their churches.

6. There is a need to research on how social media can be used in Sunday School and other teaching arms of the church in promoting sustainable peace and resolving conflicts.
7. There is a need to research on how the congregational system of government, the autonomy of a local church and priesthood of all church members can be used constructively especially in hindering and de-escalating conflicts and promoting sustainable peace in the church and the society.
8. There is a need to research on traditional or indigenous African mechanisms of resolving conflicts compared to Western conflict resolution mechanisms adopted by church pastors.
9. There is need to research on how faith-based organizations can use social media to curb the wave of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other social vices that have become rampant in many parts of Nigeria.

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Appendix I

Preliminary Survey

Dear Sir/Ma,

A scholar is carrying out research on how pastors as church administrators are making use of social media to mediatively resolve conflicts among their church members. Your kind answers to the questions in this survey that will serve as background to the study. The information supplied is purely for academic purposes.

Regards.

1. Name:
2. WhatsApp Number:
3. Are you on Telegram?
4. If yes, your Telegram Number:
5. Are you on Facebook?
6. If yes, your Facebook name:
7. Are you on Twitter?
8. If yes, your Twitter handle:
9. How often do you use social media? ☐ Regularly ☐ Rarely
10. Competency in social media (select as many as possible)
 - ☐ Sending messages
 - ☐ Receiving messages
 - ☐ Uploading audio messages
 - ☐ Uploading video messages
 - ☐ Downloading audio messages

- ☐ Downloading video messages
- ☐ Conference (or group) audio calls
- ☐ Conference (or group) video calls
- ☐ Zoom meetings

11. What do you use social media for (select as many as possible)

- ☐ Personal information
- ☐ Church information
- ☐ Church program (worship)
- ☐ Church meetings
- ☐ Small group meetings
- ☐ Family meetings
- ☐ Individual Interactions

Appendix II

Interview Guide for Church Pastors

Based on the research questions for the study, the following questions were explored during the semi-structured interview sessions with the sampled pastors (main research questions are in ***bold italics***):

- 1. What is the relationship between the philosophy of peaceful coexistence and the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations?***
 - a. What are your views about peaceful co-existence of people in your church?
 - b. In what ways are these views related to the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations especially justice and peace?
 - c. To what extent can mediative dialogue be used to resolve conflicts?
- 2. In what ways does theology support mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members?***
 - a. What are some biblical bases for conflict resolution by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
 - b. What are some biblical bases for mediative dialogue as a specific means of resolving conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
- 3. Of what nature and types are the conflicts managed by church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?***
 - a. What is the nature of conflicts managed by you as a church pastor of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
 - b. How are you resolving these conflicts as a pastor?
 - c. To what extent do you consider your conflict resolution means effective among your church members?

4. *To what extent do church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention use social media to mediatively resolve conflicts?*

- a. What are your perceptions about the use of social media for resolving conflicts among church members?
- b. To what extent are you making use of Facebook to resolve conflicts among your church members?
- c. To what extent are you making use of Twitter to resolve conflicts among your church members?
- d. To what extent are you making use of WhatsApp Messenger to resolve conflicts among your church members?
- e. To what extent are you making use of Telegram Messenger to resolve conflicts among your church members?

5. *What viable framework can the Nigerian Baptist Convention church pastors adopt to encourage the deployment of social media in mediative dialogue?*

- a. What aspect or aspects of the social media would you explore to resolve conflicts among your church members?
- b. What other suggestions would you give to other church pastors in exploring the social media to resolve conflicts among your church members thereby promoting peaceful coexistence?
- c. What challenges are you facing or likely to face in making use of the social media to resolve conflicts among your church members?

Appendix III

Interview Guide for Administrators at the National Headquarters

Based on the research questions for the study, the following questions were explored during the semi-structured interview sessions with the sampled denominational leaders of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (main research questions are in *bold italics*):

1. *What is the relationship between the philosophy of peaceful coexistence and the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations?*
 - a. What are your views about peaceful co-existence of people in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
 - b. In what ways are these views related to the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations especially justice and peace?
 - c. To what extent can mediative dialogue be used to resolve conflicts?
2. *In what ways does theology support mediative dialogue to resolve conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence among their church members?*
 - a. What are some biblical bases for conflict resolution by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
 - b. What are some biblical bases for mediative dialogue as a specific means of resolving conflicts by church pastors in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?
3. *Of what nature and types are the conflicts managed by church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?*
 - a. What is the nature of conflicts you know that church pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention are managing?
 - d. How you think church pastors are resolving these conflicts?

- e. To what extent do you consider these conflict resolution means effective among church members of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?

4. *To what extent do church pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention use social media to mediatively resolve conflicts?*

- a. What are your perceptions about the use of social media for resolving conflicts among church members?
- b. To what extent do think church pastors are making use of Facebook to resolve conflicts among their church members?
- c. To what extent do think church pastors are making use of Twitter to resolve conflicts among their church members?
- d. To what extent do think church pastors are making use of WhatsApp Messenger to resolve conflicts among their church members?
- e. To what extent do think church pastors are making use of Telegram Messenger to resolve conflicts among their church members?

5. *What viable framework can the Nigerian Baptist Convention church pastors adopt to encourage the deployment of social media in mediative dialogue?*

- a. What aspect or aspects of the social media would you explore to resolve conflicts among your church members?
- b. What other suggestions would you give to other church pastors in exploring the social media to resolve conflicts among your church members thereby promoting peaceful coexistence?
- c. What challenges do you think church pastors are facing or likely to face in making use of the social media to resolve conflicts among their church members?

Appendix IV

List of Pastors Interviewed

A. Church Pastors

SN.	Name	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Name of Church	Date Interviewed
1.	Rev. Mrs Toyin Adebayo	Female	51	13	Jubilee Life Baptist Church, Orita Basorun	May 8, 2021
2.	Rev. Mrs Mary Abiola Ayodele	Female	50	5	Triumphant Baptist Church, Ologuneru	May 10, 2021
3.	Rev. Mrs Mary Adeoye	Female	50	22	Love Family Baptist Church, Akobo	May 10, 2021
4.	Rev. Dr Samuel B. Fatoki	Male	58	13	Oluyole Metropolitan Baptist Church, Oluyole Estate	May 11, 2021
5.	Rev. Mrs. Faramade Odunayo	Female	40	7	Glory Baptist Church, Wakajaye	May 14, 2021
6	Rev. Kayode Oyedemi	Male	52	26	New Reservation Area Baptist Church	May 17, 2021
7.	Rev. Dr. John Odejayi	Male	47	19	Emmanuel Baptist Church, Odo-Ona	May 18, 2021
8.	Rev. Dr Moses Adelodun Ayangbile	Male	54	20	Abundant Life Baptist Church, Aperin	May 25, 2021
9.	Rev. Dr Benjamin Oyetunde Atoyebi	Male	58	27	Peace Community Baptist Church, Ojoo	May 25, 2021
10.	Rev. Dr Nathaniel Ajiboye Aremu	Male	64	22	Shallom Baptist Church, Orogun	May 25, 2021
11.	Rev. Dr. Edward Kehinde Alabi	Male	55	30	Molete Baptist Church, Challenge	May 27, 2021
12.	Rev. Dr. Moses M. Ojuade	Male	65	10	Calvary Baptist Church, Bodija	May 28, 2021
13.	Rev. Victor Badaru	Male	50	22	Victory Baptist Church, Olodo	May 28, 2021
14.	Rev. Ben. Areo	Male	50	20	Life Way Baptist Church, Elewuro	May 28, 2021
15.	Rev. Dr. Samuel O. Oladimeji	Male	60	35	Oore-Ofé Baptist Church, Alakia	June 1, 2021
16.	Rev. Dr. Joseph O. Afolabi	Male	57	30	Trinity Baptist Church, Moniya	June 1, 2021

17.	Rev. Dr. Tunji Taiwo	Male	61	17	Light House Baptist Church, Akobo	June 1, 2021
18.	Pastor Mrs. Olaide Ruth Sohe	Female	45	10	Divine Love Baptist Church, Mosfala	June 1, 2021
19.	Rev. Mrs. Deborah Taiwo	Female	42	10	Christ Life Baptist Church, Apata	June 3, 2021
20.	Rev. Dr. David T. Hambolu	Male	47	21	Salem Baptist Church, Yemetu	June 3, 2021

Notes:

1. All the churches are located in Ibadan metropolis.
2. All the female pastors are “associate pastors” serving under “senior pastors” of their churches.

B. Denomination Leaders

SN.	Name	Gender	Age	Years of Christian Ministry	Position	Date Interviewed
1.	Rev. Dr. Oluwole Testimony Onifade	Male	58	35	Director, Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Affairs, Nigerian Baptist Convention	May 14, 2021
2.	Rev. Mrs Esther E. Babalola	Female	55	20	Coordinator, Sunday School Division, Nigerian Baptist Convention	May 18, 2021
3.	Rev. Dr. SAK Olaleye	Male	59	35	Director, Youth and Student Ministry, Nigerian Baptist Convention	June 2, 2021
4.	Rev. Dr. Mrs. Rachel A. Lateju	Female	60	39	Executive Director, Baptist Women's Missionary Union of Nigeria	June 7, 2021
5	Rev. Dr. Dickson Madoghwe	Male	61	33	Vice President (Ministerial), Nigerian Baptist Convention	July 27, 2021

Appendix V

Uses of Facebook in Conflict Resolution¹

Indeed, Facebook has become the most popular online social network service globally. While many believe that Facebook cannot be used to resolve conflicts, experiences and research have shown that the social network can be used not only to promote peaceful coexistence of people, but also to prevent, deescalate, and even resolve conflicts. While there are many features of Facebook, these are some about the peaceful coexistence of people and conflict resolution:

1. *Having a Personal Page*

Pastors can have a form of a quasi-website² where they can have their personal information like names, pictures, email address, phone number, birthday, and the likes. Pastors can use this personal page to do many things concerning the peaceful coexistence of people and conflict resolution in their pastoral ministries. Some of these things are parts of what is highlighted below.

2. *Adding Friends to One's Page*

Pastors can add other people on Facebook as “friends” to their page. This is a way of building connections with their church members and other acquaintances. Having become friends on Facebook, it is easy for pastors to reach such people privately and through their activities on Facebook.

3. *Writing/Posting on One's Page*

Pastors can write or post messages on peaceful coexistence of people and conflict resolution on their personal pages. These messages may be in form of short quotes, Bible verses, Bible study outlines, or sermons. These posted messages will appear on the homepages of the Facebook’s “friends” of the pastors. By commenting on or “liking” the posted message through

their homepages, or the pastor's wall page, the friends are making their friends to see the posts. The pastor can use these posts previously posted as reference points during mediative dialogue seasons.

4. *Sending Personal Messages To People*

Pastors can send private messages to people via Facebook Messenger. This is in the form of chatting with the person privately. There is even an opportunity for audio or video calls through this feature. This can be used to relate with contending groups privately before any attempt to bring them together in mediative dialogue sessions. Documents or images like files, pictures, logos, or posters related to a conflict issue can be sent through this feature.

5. *Instant Messaging and Online Discussion*

This is related to the feature above. Pastors can privately chat/communicate instantaneously and simultaneously with other Facebook friends that are online. If the friend goes offline, the chat will be delivered to the friend in his/her message box.

6. *Writing/Posting on Friends' Pages*

If a Facebook friend permits, pastors can write or post messages on the friend's page. These messages will appear with the pastor's name and picture on the friend's page and the homepages of his/her friends.

7. *Having a Group Page*

This is another form of quasi-website for a group of people that share similar interests or that are pursuing the same goal. Pastors can specifically create this group page for a conflicting case and add other people on Facebook that are stakeholders to the case to the group. However,

the pastor should make the group a closed one so that unwanted people on Facebook are not able to join the group. Members of the group will have access to the activities on the group through their Facebook mailboxes. Depending on the group's settings, the owner and moderators of the group and other members of the group, can send messages to the group or post messages directly on the wall page of the group. The group will have a wall page as its homepage and other pages like the info page, message page, photo page and members' page. One can also chat/discuss with people in a Facebook group. This affords people in a Facebook group to have a sort of online conference or, in the case of this research, mediative dialogue sessions. Documents or images like files, pictures, logos, or posters related to a conflict issue can also be sent through this feature. Since these group pages are created specifically for a conflicting case, a strict rule should be made that group members should not post anything on the group wall because such posts will be accessible to the public.

8. *Finding People and Other Information*

Against the backdrop that Facebook is a sort of search engine like Google and other online search engines where one can find people and other relevant information, pastors can use the social network to find information related to a conflicting issue they are handling.

9. *Events Planner and Reminder*

Facebook has a particular page devoted to creating events and reminding of such events created by users on Facebook. A unique feature of this page is the birthday notification/reminder of one's Facebook friends. This will help pastors plan events in general and celebrate with their friends on such friends' birthdays. The feature endears the hearts of the mediatees to the pastors who are their mediators if the latter uses the feature very well.

Endnotes

1. This appendix is an adaptation of parts of Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi. *Uses of Facebook*. Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc., 2012). The adaptation was made for pastors who intend to use Facebook to resolve conflicts in their ministries and promote peaceful coexistence in society. However, other people can also apply these uses in their day-to-day activities.
2. The term "quasi-website" was first used by the researcher in the course content of the lessons used to train some pastors on how to use the Internet in their ministries in an earlier study that led to a Master thesis titled "An Appraisal of the Impact of Training Baptist Pastors in Internet Information Dissemination Capabilities in their Ministries" submitted to the Faculty of Education the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso in June 2009.

Appendix VI

Uses of Twitter in Conflict Resolution

Twitter has been a popular micro-blogging online social networking site because of the brevity of its posts. Users can send and receive messages (called *tweets*) of up to 140 characters at a time. Although it has not been popular among pastors in Nigeria yet, it can be used in conflict resolution and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society. Here are some of the ways pastors can effectively use Twitter in conflict resolution and promote peaceful coexistence in society. If pastors can acquaint themselves more with this micro-blogging site, they would discover more ways to uniquely use Twitter in conflict resolution and promote peaceful coexistence in the society.

1. *Account Name*

Pastors can decide to use their real name, nickname, or name of ministry/church as an account name on Twitter. Indeed, this will give other Twitter users the first and lasting impression of the pastors. The account name may be what will attract the mediatee to the pastor. Conversely, an unattractive account name may drive the mediatee away from or make the mediatee doubt or even lose interest in confiding and allow a pastor to interfere in any mediative dialogue session.

2. *Profile Picture*

Apart from a picture or other desired pictures, pastors can use a designed logo or poster about their ministry/church or a religious event that is about to take place, or just a poster with a specific message like Bible verse(s) or inspiring quote, as their profile picture. People who have the pastors in their contact lists and/or belong to the same group(s) with the pastors will see the profile picture/poster and tend to read the message in the profile picture/poster. Pastors can use a desired picture, logo or poster as a displayed picture for group chats also.

3. *Following Other Users*

Pastors can follow other Twitter users and ask other Twitter users to follow these users. By this, a connection has been built among these followers as each of them will see the activating of one another on Twitter. The connection will afford the pastor to interact with his church members and other people, especially when it comes to the issue of mediation.

4. *Sending Messages (Tweets)*

Pastors can consciously post (or tweet) short messages on their accounts. These can be quotes, Bible verses or simple brief messages that have to do with conflict resolution and promoting peaceful coexistence in the society. However, there are other websites like <https://www.twitlonger.com/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/> that one can use to post longer messages on Twitter. This can be done by linking such websites to one's Twitter account. Pastors can also retweet relevant tweets from other people if they desire to. The type of information that a pastor tweets will portray who the pastor is and what the pastor represents. This can attract people to the pastor and may also drive people away from the pastor.

5. *Pinning a Tweet*

A pastor can pin a message (or tweet) to remain at the top of the feed on his Twitter profile page. This can be a favourite quote or Bible verse, especially about conflict resolution and promoting peaceful coexistence in the society.

6. *Using of Hashtags*

Pastors can use "hashtags" to group their posts (or tweets) by topic or type. This can be done by using the sign "#" before a word to refer to the word or the use of the sign "@" before someone else's username to refer to the person. There is even what is termed "hashflags" to

promote a campaign. Pastors can use this to promote some like “Peace for All”, “Say No to Conflicts”, and the like.

7. *Direct Messages*

Pastors can send direct messages privately to any of their followers. Only the follower will receive the message. The receiver can also reply through a direct message sent privately to the originator of the conversation. By this, the pastor can converse with any of his followers privately, and no third party will have access to such conversation.

8. *Twitter DM Groups*

Pastors can create private Twitter DM groups to interact with a small number of people with direct messages that each group member will receive. This is good for mediative dialogue sessions as a Twitter DM group can be created for a specific conflict. The only disadvantage of this feature is that any group member can add any other person to the group without the consent of the group creator.

9. *Twitter Lists*

Related to, but different from, Twitter DM groups are Twitter lists. Pastors can select either public or private list. The only disadvantage of this feature is that only the list's creator will have access to the list. It is just a way of building relationships and easily following people's tweets on one's list.

10. *“Friends Only Tweets”*

This is a new feature of Twitter where only selected people will see what they posts. As this is a new feature on Twitter, pastors can explore it and see how they can make the best use of it to use Twitter in conflict resolution and promote peaceful coexistence in society.

11. AutoComplete in Tweets

Pastors can use AutoComplete in Tweets to expedite sending a message (or tweet) directed to a particular Twitter user using the @username format. It may also be a suggesting #hashtag (keywords associated with a tweet) to make keyword-tagging of tweets easier. However, pastors must be very careful of this so that they do not send messages to the wrong person or use the wrong “hashtag” when sending their messages.

12. Limit Who Can Reply One’s Tweet

Pastors can decide who can reply to their tweets. This may be “Everyone” (this is the standard Twitter and the default setting), “Only people you follow”, or “Only people you mention”. While the last two settings restrict those who can reply one’s tweet, the feature will not control others from viewing one’s tweet, retweet, retweet with a comment, and “like” these tweets.

13. Scheduling Tweets

Pastors can type a draft message and save it as “an unfinished tweet” to be sent later. If the message is typed on a computer Twitter app, it will be available both on the computer and the mobile device Twitter app, but if typed on the mobile device Twitter app, it will not be available on the computer Twitter app. The saved draft message can be scheduled to be sent at a specific time.

14. Read a Tweet before Sending It

To guide against misinformation and misrepresentation through wrong messages that were unconsciously sent out, pastors can use this new Android feature that prompts them to open an article link where they can read what they are about to send out before actually sending it.

15. Tweeting Voice with Audio Clips

With the restriction of posting only 140 characters, pastors can use the audio tweet feature to share a 140-second voice recording with their followers. Another 140-second voice recording can start automatically if the first period is insufficient. Pastors can use this to pray with their mediatees or pass specific information on a conflicting issue that they deem fit could best be shared by voice message.

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Appendix VII

Uses of WhatsApp in Conflict Resolution¹

Being the most popular instant messaging (IM) app today with tens of features, WhatsApp Messenger has become a veritable tool in conflict resolution and promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society. Here are some of the ways pastors can make effective use of WhatsApp in conflict resolution and promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society. The applications here are not exhaustive. As pastors are getting familiar with the uses of each of the features of WhatsApp, they will be discovering how to peculiarly apply them in conflict resolution and promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society.

1. *Profile Name*

Pastors can decide to use their real name, nickname, name of ministry/church, a combination of characters, or even smiley, website address, and so on as profile name. There is even an opportunity to use a short profile as one's display name. Undoubtedly, this will give the contacts of pastors or anyone who sees the pastors' profile name in his contact list or group a message about the pastors. For a group created to settle a particular conflict, pastors need a profile name to differentiate the group created specifically for mediative dialogue sessions from other groups.

2. *Profile Picture*

Apart from a picture or other desired pictures, pastors can use a designed logo or poster about their ministry/church or a religious event that is about to take place, or just a poster with a specific message like Bible verse(s) or inspiring quote, as their profile picture. People who have the pastors in their contact lists and/or belong to the same group(s) with the pastors will see the profile picture/poster and tend to read the message in the profile

picture/poster. Pastors can use a desired picture, logo or poster as a displayed picture for group chats also.

3. Profile Status

Instead of using any of the WhatsApp default statuses, pastors can use a customised status of at most **140** characters that may be a short inspiring quote, a short Bible verse, short information about the pastors' ministry/church or a religious event. People who have the pastors in their contact lists and/or belong to the same group(s) with the pastors will see the profile status and tend to read the message.

It should be noted that the pastors' or the group's profile name, picture and status say many things about the pastors or the group. These are the first things that people will see, and they can be a cause for people losing interest in the pastors and their efforts in resolving conflicts and promoting of peaceful coexistence in the society.

4. Individual Postings

Pastors can send devotional messages, sermons, Bible study outlines, short quotes, prayer wishes, and other relevant posts to people individually or through group posting, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence in the society and guiding against and de-escalating conflicts.

5. Individual Chat

Pastors can chat individually with any person in their WhatsApp contact list. It is also good especially for informing, consulting, counselling and praying with/for individuals in the WhatsApp contact lists of the pastors.

6. *Status Message*

Pastors can send a picture and/or message in form of short quotes, prayer wishes, and so on as status messages that will be visible to the contacts of the pastors for **24** hours only. This message can be something that talks about living in peace in the society.

7. *Group Chat/Messages*

Apart from using WhatsApp groups to send devotional messages, sermons, Bible study outlines, short quotes, prayer wishes, and others to members of these groups, pastors have the opportunity of creating WhatsApp groups or joining existing ones for specific conflict cases. The pastor should be the sole administrator of the group as to be able to control who can join the group, who should be removed from the group (if need be), and moderation of the group to open and close that group for discussion as the mediative dialogue session progress. When the group is opened, members can engage one another in discussing the conflicting issue and how to resolve it.

8. *Resetting of Group Link*

If the pastor, as the group administrator, suspects that the link of the WhatsApp group the pastor created for a specific conflict situation has been compromised, the pastor can reset the link. This will prevent unwanted people from joining the group through the compromised link.

9. *Broadcast Messages*

The pastor can create a broadcast list on WhatsApp specifically for a conflict issue, add the conflicting parties, and other concerned parties where the pastor will be sending relevant messages on the conflict issue to the members of the list. A unique advantage of this

WhatsApp feature is that only the creator of the list will know and have access to the members of the list. Other members will not know one another or be able to interact with one another. This advantage is also a disadvantage because the creator will have to be relaying the responses of the other members to them each time a list member divulges relevant information.

10. Sending Audio Recordings/Voice Messages

The pastor can make a short or long recorded message and send them to other people, especially the conflicting parties, through individual chat, group chat or broadcast message.

11. Voice and Video Calls

Voice or/and video calls through WhatsApp can be used to send information and to contending groups. With WhatsApp group calling, a pastor can hold a conference/meeting resolving conflicts through WhatsApp.

12. Sending Documents/Images

The pastor can send documents or images like files, pictures, logos or posters that are related to a conflict issue to the conflicting parties. Recorded messages and audio/video messages or events can be sent quickly through WhatsApp.

13. Formatting Text

The fact that pastors can send messages in bold, italics or strikethrough by simply using the special characters before and after the words to get the formatting of one's choice makes WhatsApp Messenger unique. For example, using asterisk for **bold** (*term*),

underscore for *italics* (term), and tilde for ~~strikethrough~~ (~term~) can make the pastor lay emphasis on a particular word, phrase, clause or sentence.

14. Sending and Receiving Emoticons and Sticker Packs

Emoticons,² “stickers” and “emojis”³ can be used as expressions when the pastor is chatting with, especially when counselling other people in a conflict issue.

15. Knowing Who Has Read your Messages in a Group

This feature is a source of motivation as the pastor can know the impact of his message on the group members, especially knowing those that have and have not read his message in the group. It is a way of monitoring group members also. The pastor can appreciate those that are frequently reading his messages, and the pastor can rebuke or encourage those that are not reading the messages.

16. Pulling Back Accidentally Sent Messages

If a pastor accidentally sends a message to his contacts or a group, the pastor can pull back the message within sixty minutes of sending the message, thereby saving the pastor from the embarrassment that such a message may cause his reputation and ministry. The only disadvantage here is that recipients of such messages will be notified that a message has been deleted.

17. Schedule of WhatsApp Messages and Setting Up Reminders

In a situation where a pastor is very busy with ministry activities, the pastor can schedule messages to be sent later. Using WhatsApp scheduling feature will help deliver the desired message at the desired time.

Endnotes

1. This appendix is an adaptation of parts of Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi. *WhatsApp Messenger: Timeline, Features, and Usages in Christian Ministries*. (Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc, 2020). The adaptation was made for pastors who intend to use WhatsApp Messenger to resolve conflicts in their ministries and promote peaceful coexistence in society. However, other people can also apply these uses in their day-to-day activities.
2. The word emoticon is derived from two words: emotions and icons. Emoticons are a shorthand method of explaining feelings like smiles, frowns, winks, and the likes on the Internet. They grew from clever combinations of punctuation marks usually translated by software into an actual face. To use these features on WhatsApp, you can press the key showing an emoticon of your face as you type your message, and more emoticons will surface for your use.
3. Emojis (literally “picture characters”) are pictograms, logograms, ideograms and smileys used in electronic messages and web pages. Warning: Do not abuse emojis in group chats. Some people may not understand the meaning of emojis.

Appendix VIII

Uses of Telegram in Conflict Resolution

Telegram Messenger is a cloud-based instant messaging service similar to WhatsApp Messenger. Because of some of the advantages that Telegram Messenger has over WhatsApp Messenger, people are gradually migrating from WhatsApp Messenger to Telegram Messenger. Here are some of the features of Telegram Messenger that can be used in conflict resolution and promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society by pastors and other people. Since Telegram Messenger and WhatsApp Messenger are similar instant messaging apps, some of the explanations made here are similar to the ones made under “Uses of WhatsApp in Conflict Resolution”. As one uses the instant messaging app, one will continue to discover more app features concerning conflict resolution and promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society. Most of these explanations are drawn from this researcher's personal use of the app for almost a decade.

1. Profile Name

Pastors can decide to use their real name, nickname, name of ministry/church, combination of characters, or even smiley, website address, and so on as profile name. There is even an opportunity to use a short profile as one's display name. Undoubtedly, this will give the contacts of pastors or anyone who sees the pastors' profile name in his contact list or group a message about the pastors. For a group or channel created to settle a particular conflict, pastors need a profile name to differentiate the group or channel explicitly created for mediative dialogue sessions from other groups or channels.

2. Profile Picture

Apart from a picture or other desired pictures, pastors can use a designed logo or poster about their ministry/church or a religious event that is about to take place, or just a poster with a specific message like Bible verse(s) or inspiring quote, as their profile picture. People that have the pastors in their contact lists and belong to the same group(s) or channel(s) with the pastors will see the profile picture/poster and may tend to read the message in the profile picture/poster. Pastors can use a desired picture, logo or poster as a displayed picture for group or channel chats also.

3. Individual Postings

Pastors can send devotional messages, sermons, Bible study outlines, short quotes, prayer wishes, and other relevant posts to people individually or through group posting, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence in the society and guiding against and de-escalating conflicts.

4. Individual Chat

Pastors can chat individually with any person in their Telegram contact list. It is also suitable, especially for informing, consulting, counselling and praying with/for individuals in the Telegram contact lists of the pastors.

5. Group or Channel Chat/Messages

Telegram has two features that are similar but different in some ways. These features are Telegram groups and Telegram channels. Each of the features can accommodate up to **200,000** members. This is one of Telegram's advantages over WhatsApp that can accommodate only **256** members. Apart from using Telegram groups and Telegram channels

to send devotional messages, sermons, Bible study outlines, short quotes, prayer wishes, and others to members of these groups or channels, pastors have the opportunity of creating Telegram groups and Telegram channels or joining existing ones for specific conflict cases. The pastor should be the sole administrator of the group or channel as to be able to control who can join the group or channel, which should be removed from the group (if need be), and moderation of the group to open and close that group for discussion as the mediative dialogue session progress. When the group or channel is opened, members can engage one another in discussing the conflicting issue and how to resolve it.

6. *Sending Audio Recordings/Voice Messages*

The pastor can make a short or long recorded message and send them to other people, especially the conflicting parties, through individual chat, group chat or broadcast message.

7. *Voice and Video Calls*

Voice or/and video calls through Telegram can be used to send information to conflicting parties. With Telegram group calling, a pastor can hold a conference/meeting resolving conflicts through Telegram Messenger. The pastor can even initiate a standard group voice chat for all members.

8. *Sending Documents/Images*

The pastor can send documents or images like files, pictures, logos, or posters related to a conflict issue to the conflicting parties. Recorded and audio/video messages or events can be easily sent through Telegram. An advantage of this is that the documents or images will remain permanent on the group or channel even if one changes/swap the device that one is using for the app. The disadvantage here is that a new member will have access to all the

previous chats, documents and images that have been shared on the group or channel, which may not be the wish of the pastor or any of the mediatees. However, there is a feature where one can create secret chats that use end-to-end encryption. One can only access the documents with a specific phone or device in this feature.

9. Sending and Receiving Emoticons and Sticker Packs

Like in WhatsApp Messenger and other social media, emoticons, “stickers”, and “emojis” (as explained under “Uses of WhatsApp in Conflict Resolution”) can be used as expressions when the pastor is chatting with, and especially when counselling other people in a conflict issue.

10. Deleting Unwanted Messages

If a pastor as the administrator of a Telegram group or channel feels that a message either by the pastor or any member of the group or channel is unwanted or not fitting for the purpose of the group or channel, the pastor can delete the message anytime. While WhatsApp Messenger has the disadvantage of notifying all the group members that a message has been deleted, no one will know that any message has been deleted in a Telegram group or channel.

11. Editing Sent Messages

If the pastor realizes that he has made a mistake in a sent message and does not want to delete the message, the message can be edited with the Telegram edit feature. However, Telegram will place an “edited” label on the message to let receivers know of the update.

12. Pinning of Messages

The pastor can pin a desired message and the message will appear permanently at the top of the group or channel just below the name of the group or channel. Every of the group or channel can easily reference such message.

13. Schedule of WhatsApp Messages and Setting Up Reminders

The pastor can schedule messages to be sent later. Using the Telegram scheduling feature will help in delivering the desired message at the desired time.

14. Draft Message

Pastors can start typing a message in a chat, group or channel and leave it as a draft to be sent later. This draft message can be seen on all the devices linked to one's Telegram account with. This means that one can start typing a message on one's mobile phone and continue on one's laptop or desktop. The draft will remain in the editing area on all sync devices until it is sent or deleted.

15. "Do-not-Disturb" Messages

If one does not want to disturb the other person or other people in a group or channel, one can choose "Send without Sound" to silently deliver the message to the other party without them getting a notification.

16. Chat folders

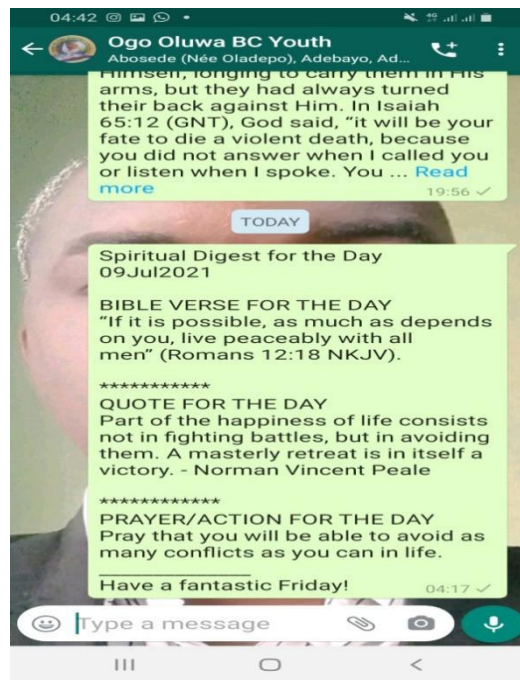
In Telegram Messenger, pastors can classify all their chats into various folders. This lets pastors to deal with a group of chats at a time and avoid others when they are not very

significant. For example, pastors could set a group to include all chats from a particular conflict case and another for other ministry matters or personal matters.

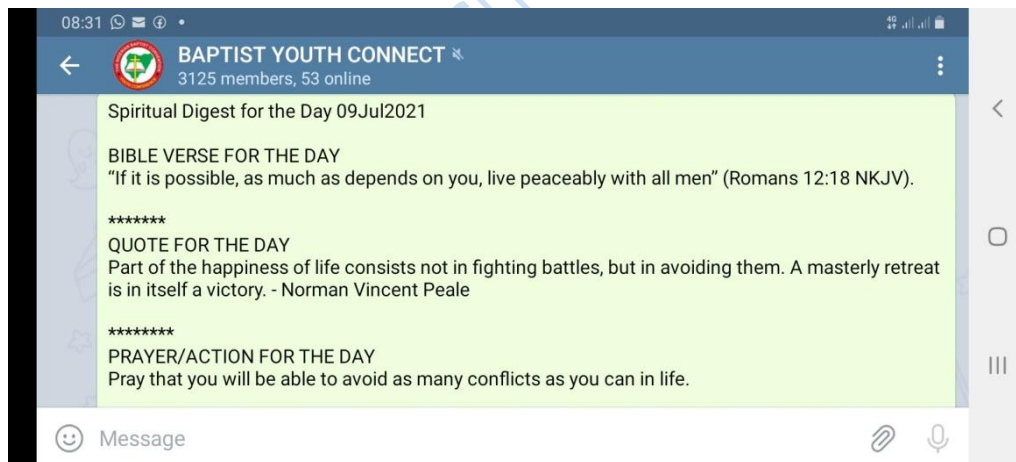
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Appendix IX

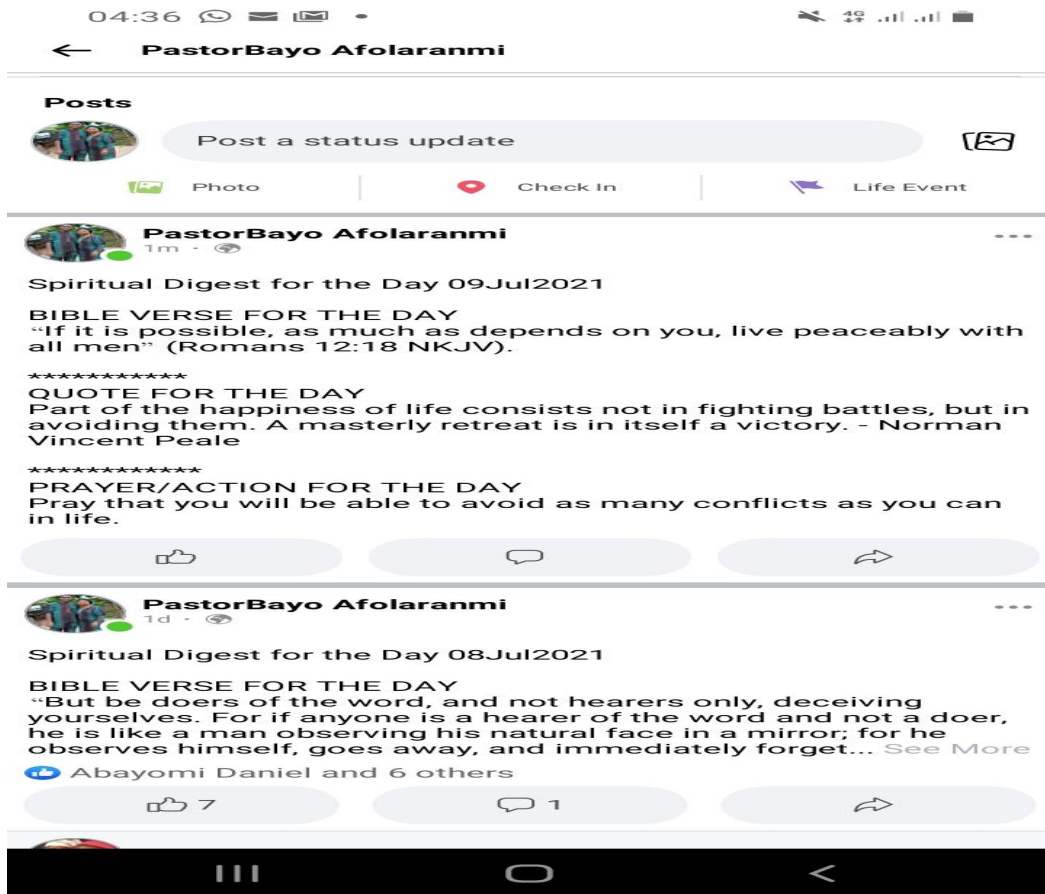
Photoshots of Samples of Direct Postings on Social Media



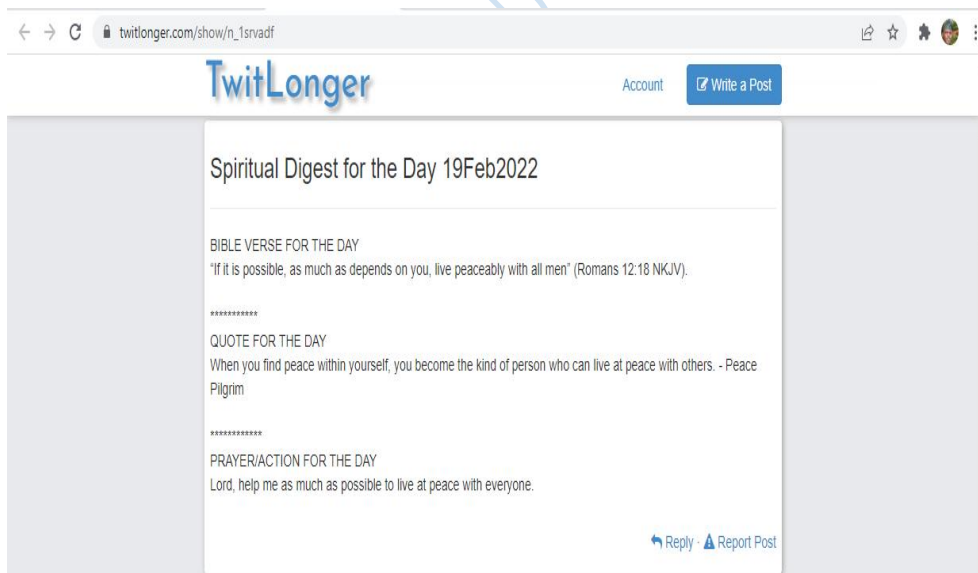
Photoshot of Sample of a Direct Posting on a Church Youth Fellowship WhatsApp Group



Photoshot of Sample of a Direct Posting on a Church Youth Fellowship Telegram Group



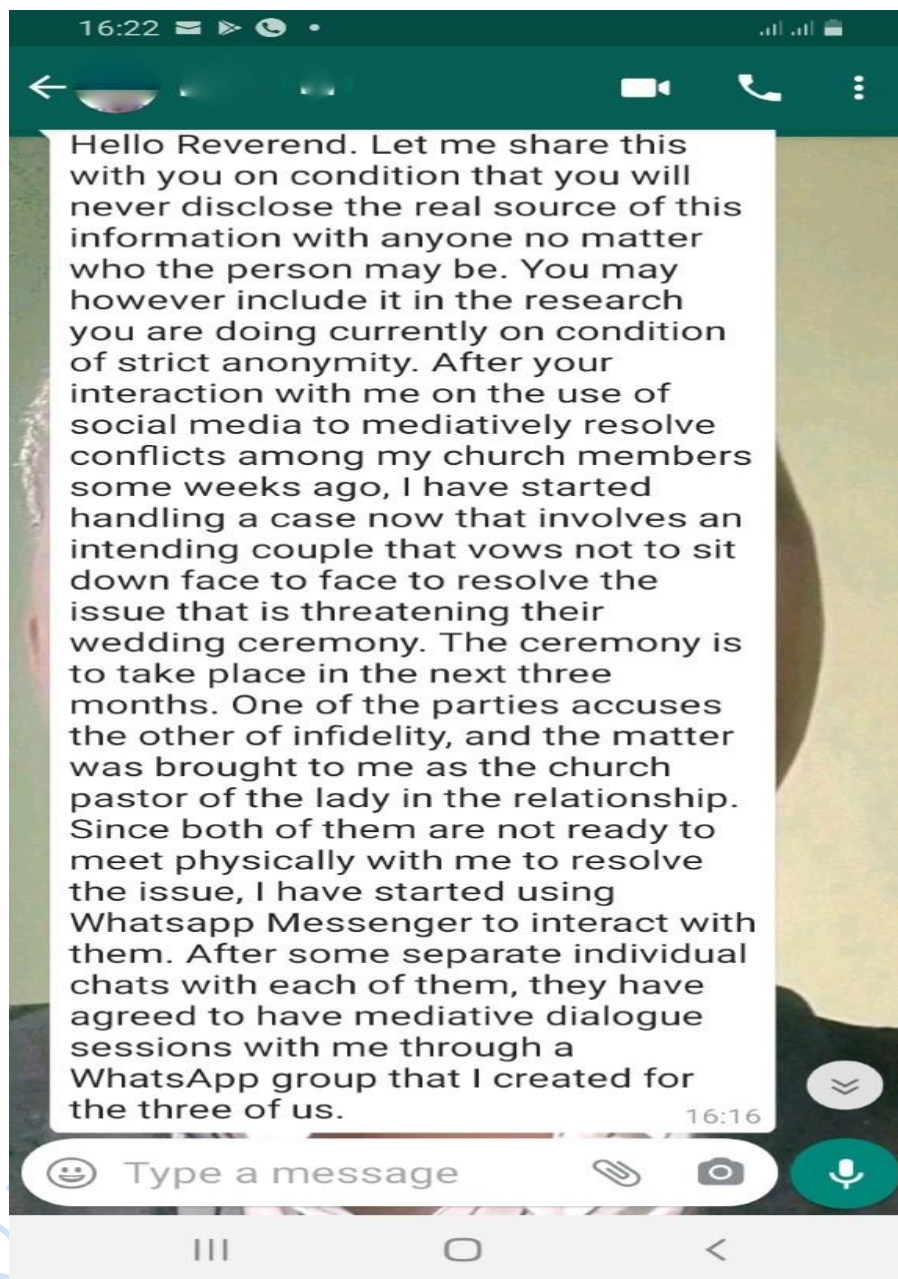
Photoshot of Sample of a Direct Posting on a Facebook Page



Photoshot of Sample of a Direct Posting on a TwiLonger Page (that automatically appears on the associated Twitter Page though as a link)

Appendix X

A Photoshot of a WhatsApp Message from a Respondent



A Photoshot of a WhatsApp Message from a Respondent

Appendix XI

Ecumenism for Development and Peace Initiative (EDAPI) Promotional Flyer

The flyer features a header with an orange background on the left containing the EDAPI logo (a globe with a dove and the text 'EDAPI ECUMENISM FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE INITIATIVE') and a photograph on the right showing people in white clothing working on a wall with the word 'PEOPLE' written on it. Below the header is a green band with 'RC:96590' and the large white text 'EDAPI', with the full name 'ECUMENISM FOR DEVELOPMENT & PEACE INITIATIVE' in a yellow box underneath. The main body is light blue with two circular callouts: a red one for 'Vision' and a green one for 'Mission Statement'. At the bottom, a green banner lists 'CORE VALUES (Pretaces)' in red, followed by a list of values in blue and green text.

RC:96590

EDAPI

ECUMENISM FOR DEVELOPMENT & PEACE INITIATIVE

Vision

Becoming a foremost godly organization protecting the interests of the disadvantaged for the actualization of their full potential.

Mission Statement

To improve the well-being and rights of the less privileged through holistic empowerment approach, inter-faith relationships, community mobilization, peace work, reconciliation, research and advocacy for effective and self-driven societal transformation without any form of discrimination'.

CORE VALUES (Pretaces)

- * Peace Building
- * Team Work
- * Commitment
- * Service to Humanity
- * Equity and Justice
- * Accountability
- * Effective Communication
- * Religious Harmony

EDAPI Promotional Flyer (front page)

OBJECTIVES

- * Sensitize and equip the grassroots religious actors towards achieving peace and developments.
- * Mobilise and create strategic drive to strengthen alliance against violence extremism across age groups; youths in particular and community/religious leaders as a whole.
- * Facilitate peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationship through synergy and dialogue.
- * To strengthen and assist the needy and less privileged in our society.
- * To network with and to cooperate with other development partners in order to engender sustainable development.

OUR CAMPAIGNS

- * Civil Leadership Training Summit
- * Food Security Project
- * Networking
- * Youth Development and Empowerment
- * Research and Data Base
- * Monarchs Empowerment Ministry
- * Community Service and Rural Developments
- * Advocacy on National and Social Concerns
- * Chaplaincy Training and Services
- * #... tooyoungtodie
- * Gerontology Ministry
- * Gender Justice
- * Political Education and Election Integrity Seminar

PROMOTED BY:

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Directorate of Ecumenism, Interfaith & Special Duties

Baptist Building, Oke-bola, Ibadan.

Website: www.edapi.ng

Email: info@edapi.ng or nbcledapi@gmail.com

Phone Number: 08033447876, 08159994000

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube: [nbcledapi](#)

Support this Advocacy

Firstbank Plc.

Account Name: EDAPI Account Number: 2033404752

EDAPI Promotional Flyer (back page)

Appendix XII

Picture of the Researcher and the President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention



The Researcher posed for a picture after his interview on November 8, 2021 with Rev. Dr Israel Adelani Akanji, ZAKI, FAR, the President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, who is also a theologian, scholar and leading practitioner of conflict transformation and interreligious peacebuilding in Nigeria

Bio-data

A. Personal Data

1. Full Name: Adebayo Ola AFOLARANMI
Address: c/o 6, Baptist Building, Oke Bola,
PMB 5113, Ibadan, Nigeria.
E-mail Addresses: spiritualdigest@hotmail.com,
spiritualdigest@yahoo.com
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8057-137X>
Phone Numbers: +234 805 515 9591
2. Date of Birth: December 8, 1970
Place of Origin: Pamo-Isin, Kwara State, Nigeria
Place of Birth: Iwo-Isin, Nigeria
3. Nationality: Nigeria
Languages Spoken: Yoruba, English, Esperanto
4. Name and Address of Next of Kin: Mrs. Florence Opeyemi Afolaranmi
Registry, Lead City University, Ibadan.

B. Educational Background (with Dates and Qualifications)

1. Primary Education
 - a. Christian (LSMB) School, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria (1976-1982) –
Primary School Leaving Certificate
2. Secondary Education
 - a. Omu-Aran High School, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria (1983-1987) –
School Certificate Ordinary Level
3. Higher Educational Institutions

- a. Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria (1990-1993) –
Nigeria Certificate in Education (Yoruba/Christian Religious Studies)
- b. ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Kwara State, Nigeria (1995-1997) –
Bachelor of Religious Education
- c. The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria
(2007-2009) – Master of Theology in Religious Education
- d. Trinity College, Dublin (University of Dublin), Republic of Ireland (2015-
2016) – Master of Philosophy in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation
- e. Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria (2019-2022) – Doctor of Philosophy in
Peace and Conflict Studies (in view)

C. Working Experiences with Dates

1. Class Teacher (January 1994-July 1995) – Community (LGEA) School, Oke-Oyi-Isin,
Kwara State, Nigeria
2. Lecturer (August 1997-June 1998) – Faith Bible Institute, Akobo, Ibadan, Oyo State,
Nigeria
3. Ministerial Officer (Field Services) (July 1999-September 2004) – Youth Ministries
Division, Nigerian Baptist Convention Headquarters (Baptist Building), Ibadan, Oyo
State, Nigeria
4. Ministerial Officer (Proof-Reader/Yoruba Translator) (October 2004-May 2009) –
Publications Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention Headquarters, (Baptist
Building), Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria
5. Ministerial Officer (Curriculum Writer) (June 2009-July 2011) – Sunday School
Division, Nigerian Baptist Convention Headquarters (Baptist Building), Ibadan, Oyo
State, Nigeria

6. Internet Ministry Officer (August 2011-January 2017) – Internet Ministry Division,
Nigerian Baptist Convention Headquarters (Baptist Building), Ibadan, Oyo State,
Nigeria
7. Chief Ministerial Officer (Research and Feedback) (January 2017 till date) – Christian
Education Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention Headquarters (Baptist Building),
Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

D. Awards and Certifications

1. Best Graduating Student, Yoruba, Federal College of Education, Okene (1993)
2. Merit Award of Honour for Excellence in Internet Ministry by Web Missions Africa
(2015)
3. Certificate of Completion, Facilitator in Dialogue for Peaceful Change –Corrymeela,
Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom (2016)
4. Certificate of Completion, Conflict Management and Mediation Skills – Mediate NI,
Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom (2016)
5. Certificate of Achievement in Religion, Conflict and Peace – Harvard University
(2020)
6. Certificate of Completion, Critical Thinking for Self Development – Metropolitan
School of Business and Management UK (2021)
7. Certificate of Participation, Advanced Methodologies for Contemporary Research: A
Pragmatic Approach Government – Ramnarayan Chellaram College of Commerce
and Management, Karnataka, India (2021)
8. Professional Certificate in Dealing With Ethical Issues In Research – Metropolitan
School of Business and Management, London, UK (2021)
9. Certificate of Participation, Professional Training Workshop in Alternative Dispute

Resolution (ADR) and Peace Building – Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP)
(2021)

10. Certificate of Attendance, Strategic Cooperation in Higher Education in Pandemic Context: Experiences, Challenges, and Perspectives – Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania (2021)

E. Memberships of Professional Bodies

1. Fellow, Scholars Academic and Scientific Society (SAS Society)
2. Fellow, Ife Institute of Advanced Studies
3. Associate Member, Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP)
4. Member, Research and Academic Professionalism, Society for Research and Academic Excellence
5. Member, International Association of Peace and Conflict Studies
6. Member, Association for Conflict Resolution
7. Member, International Association for Conflict Management
8. Member, The Pastoral Counselling Association of Nigeria
9. Member, African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions (ASSOSER)
10. Member, The Internet Society

F. Publications

1. Theses/Dissertations

- a. “Ipa ti Awon Esin Atohunrinwa n Ko ninu Asa Ibile Ekun Isin” (a Nigeria Certificate in Education Project)

- b. "The Impacts of Classroom Management in the Primary Schools of Irepodun LGA of Kwara State" (a Bachelor of Religious Education Project)
- c. "An Appraisal of the Impact of Training Baptist Pastors in Internet Information Dissemination in their Ministries" (A Master of Theology Thesis).
- d. "Faith-based Responses to Displaced Boko Haram Victims: A Case Study of Baptist Churches in Ogbomoso Land, Nigeria" (A Master of Philosophy Dissertation).

2. Published Books

1. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *WhatsApp Messenger: Timeline, Features, and Usages in Christian Ministries*. Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc., 2020.
2. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Ministering through the Internet: A Decade of Unique Experiences*. Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc., 2013.
3. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Uses of Facebook*. Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc., 2012.
4. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Arofo Otite*. Raleigh: Lulu Press Inc., 2012.
5. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Ronke, la Jaluzulino*. Linukso: Monda Assembleia Socia, 2010.
6. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Ministering through the Internet: An Essential Guide*. Ibadan: Charisa Books & Publishing, 2009.
7. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Instruisto*. Lome: Fondaço Afriko de UEA, 2003.
8. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. *Saved Forever? A Systematized Biblical Teaching on Salvation*. Ibadan: Jilog Nigeria Company, 2001.

3. Chapters in Edited Books

1. Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola. "Introduction." In Kehinde, Emmanuel Olumide, Adelokoji Ijaola, Adebayo Ola Afolaranmi, Dickson Madoghwe, Emmanuel Ubandoma,

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Signature

Date

University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that the thesis by Afolaranmi, Adebayo Ola in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University Format and Style.

Signature

Date